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THE LIFE OF GENERAL DYER

BY

IAN COLVIN

William Blackwood & Sons Ltd.
Edinburgh and London
1929

THIS BOOK OF AN ENGLISH SOLDIER
IS DEDICATED TO HIS MEMORY.

*Judicis officium est, ut res,
ita tempora rerum.*

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The map of Brigadier-General Dyer's Operations in the Sarhad is compiled from those in his book, 'The Raiders of the Sarhad,' published by Messrs H. F. and G. Witherby (London, 1921). Acknowledgment is also due to the Government of India (High Commissioner's Office) for permission to reproduce the map of Thal from the Official Account of the Third Afghan War, compiled by the General Staff Branch, Army Headquarters, India (Calcutta, 1926); and to H.M. Stationery Office for leave to reproduce the two maps from the Report of the Disorders Inquiry Committee (1920).

The Life of General Dyer.



CHAPTER I.

CHOTA SAHIB.

FAMILY CONNECTIONS WITH INDIA—A HILL-STATION BREWERY—
EARLY DAYS AT SIMLA—BISHOP COTTON'S SCHOOL—HIMALAYAN
HOLIDAYS.

REGINALD EDWARD HARRY DYER came of a west country family long following the sea and long connected with India. A vague tradition places their origin in the village of Pilton, near Barnstaple, in Devon ; but I could find no trace of them there, save possibly an old stone in the chancel of Pilton Church to two "sonnes of Edward Dyer of this Parish Gent," who both died in the year 1626. We come to certainties less remote with Edward Dyer of the Royal Navy, and Mary his wife, whose son John was born at Stoke Damerel, Plymouth, Devon, on the 7th April 1799. This John Dyer, grandfather of Reginald, married Julia, daughter of Abraham and Mabel Oxenham, who was born on 25th April 1804 at Barnstaple. The marriage took place at St John's Cathedral, Calcutta, on

24th March 1827, John Dyer being then in the Honourable East India Company's Pilot Service. All that we know of this John Dyer was that he commanded one of the Company's brigs, and fought with success those Dyak pirates who then infested the seas, islands, and estuaries of Burma and the Malay Archipelago. His son Edward, father of Reginald, was born on 7th July 1831 in Calcutta, as may be gathered from the register of St James's Church in that city, where he was baptised on 25th September following.

These definite little points twinkle in a vast oblivion. I gather that either Edward was sent home or John Dyer retired to the neighbourhood of Pilton, near Barnstaple. It is certain that Edward was educated in England. There is a family tradition that he should have entered the Army; but fell in love with a Barnstaple girl, Mary Passmore, married her, and, with the purchase money of his commission in hand, set out for the East to make his fortune. I learn from another source that he was educated as an engineer, either for the civil or military side, and went out to India hoping to find work in that capacity, but was there persuaded by his eldest brother, John, a barrister, living at Mussoorie, to go home again and learn how to brew beer, which he did, and returned well equipped with that delectable knowledge.¹

His brother's advice was shrewd: with the great thirst of Hindustan, there was the conjunction of

¹ James Dyer, of Westfield, Lymington, a brother of John and Edward, survives, and to him I am indebted for what is most definite of this information. Two of the General's sisters, Mrs Ducane Smithe and Mrs Sykes, were so kind as to give me some personal recollections.

many Englishmen, servants and soldiers of John Company. Attempt had been made to fill the aching void with those India ales which were specially brewed to withstand the tossings and temperatures of the long ocean voyage round the Cape of Good Hope, but the costs and risks of that feat of transport were heavy. On the other hand, the heat of the Plains was thought to make brewing impossible in India. In the forties a gallant pioneer made the attempt in the Hills, and on the ruins of that enterprise at the Hill station of Kasauli, Edward Dyer set up his first brewery. "With a knowledge of physics quite unusual in those days, he so improved on the methods of his predecessor that, against all predictions, the venture prospered."¹

Edward Dyer sent home for Mary Passmore, who came, in the best cabin of an East Indiaman, some short time before the Indian Mutiny, and it is probable that she and her husband sheltered some of the English women who escaped, trembling and aghast, from the smoke and carnage of the Plains below to the safety of the Hills. It is certain that report of—

"Clanging fights and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and
praying hands,"

came up to the Himalayan stations like the hot blast from a furnace door suddenly opened. The massacre at Cawnpore, the defence of the Residency at Lucknow, the siege of Delhi, the deeds of

¹ See 'Pioneer' of 1st May 1902 for an obituary notice of Edward Dyer.

Nicholson, Hodson, and other heroes of that ferocious struggle, must have furnished nursery tales for the Dyer children.

There were many—Clare, Arthur, Edward, Walter, Alice, Reginald, Ada, Ethel, Mabel—the characteristically mid-Victorian family. Edward Dyer was growing in reputation and prosperity. General Cautley, Sir William (then Lieut.-Colonel) Olpherts, and some others who had combined to form the Murree Brewery Company, asked their rival to throw in his lot with them ; Mr Dyer agreed to take over the management, and was at Murree when this story properly begins.

For it was there, on 9th October 1864, that Reginald Edward Harry, youngest son and sixth child of the Dyer family, was born. When, however, Rex was only two years old, the Dyers removed to their new home at Simla, presumably to be close to the brewery which Edward Dyer had set up at Solon near-by.

Edward Dyer we might call the Ganymedes of an Indian Olympus, whose gods were the major deities of the Government of India and the minor deities of the Punjab Administration, and whose nectar was bottled beer. Simla stands on a six-mile spur of the Himalayas between 7000 and 8000 feet above sea-level. In the seventies, as those who know their ' Plain Tales ' will remember, the Public Offices and the broad road round Jakko were still in the womb of the Public Works Department, the place being then approached by a ' sixty mile uphill jolt ' in tonga, ekka, or dandy from Kalka in the foothills below. It had already been for fifty years

the summer refuge of the European, and because English children could there find rosy cheeks, Bishop Cotton had chosen it for the site of his famous school.

The Dyers then lived in a house called Ladyhill, built on English lines in a big garden full of English fruits and flowers. A wonderful playground surrounds Simla. The children learned to ride on the donkeys of the *dhobis*, and as Rex grew from child to boy, he and his brothers made expeditions deeper and deeper into the surrounding hills, carrying guns, camping out in the woods at night, with no one but an old chaprasi to look after them. It is a region of mountains, ravines, and rivers: Chor, seeming near-by, rises 12,000 feet; farther back the eternal snows, twice as high, guard the secrets of Tibet; and between them the Sutlej makes her way to join her sister rivers in the plains of the Punjab. Deep in the valleys orchids, bamboos, and giant ferns; climbing up the mountain-side deodar, ilex, and rhododendron; higher still the pine woods, and above them moss and rock and snow. Hill streams, where lurk the great green-and-gold mahsir, crossed on ropes of twisted birch-twigs hanging over deep ravines; woods full of jungle fowl and pheasants; gooral on the lower slopes; thar in the higher cliffs—a noble playground for boys.

There Rex learned to shoot; but an unhappy little accident gave him a lifelong distaste for killing in sport. Once, when shooting at a bird, he heard a cry from the foliage beyond, and looking more closely saw a small monkey with drops of bright blood on her grey fur. Tears streamed down her

cheeks as she tried to wipe herself clean with a handful of leaves, and catching sight of the boy she looked at him so reproachfully that her eyes haunted his dreams for months afterwards. Thenceforth, although a good shot, he had a distaste for shikar; and although he sometimes joined in shooting parties, never chose to kill save for the pot or of necessity. An ironic fate was in its own time to bring this tender-hearted boy face to face with the dark dilemma of the Jallianwala Bagh.

It is fair to add that he excepted the tribe of snakes from this general rule of benevolence, it being his favourite game as a small boy to seek them out and kill them with a cane. Once, seeing a big fellow slip into a hole, he seized it by the tail and pulled until the snake suddenly gave way. They both rolled together to the bottom of the hill.

The brothers went to Bishop Cotton's school, where Rex learned among other things to use his fists. The aptitude he had from his father, as became a man of Devon both boxer and wrestler; the occasion of offence from his mother, from whom he inherited a stutter which that strong-minded lady had contrived to conquer in herself, but which exposed her son to the derision of his schoolfellows. Rex being sensitive, hot-tempered, and pugnacious, frequently came home with the scars of battle on his face, and stubbornly fought his way through Bishop Cotton's school. Rex's surviving sisters remember him as a manly and protective brother. They also went to school in Simla, and when Rex was still very small it was his duty to convoy them home. On one occasion, when alone upon this errand, he came full

face upon a hyena, which stood motionless in the narrow hill path, barring his way. Rex, remembering what he had been told about animals fearing the human eye, advanced slowly, staring steadily at the horrid jowl, turned as he passed the animal, and, still staring, walked backwards until it was out of his sight. Thus early in life he thrilled with the man's instinct to protect his womankind.

Hindustani was Rex Dyer's nursery tongue, and from the servants of the household, in the crowded bazars of Simla town, and among the hillmen of the country round, he gained his first knowledge, deep, familiar, and lasting, of the Indian people. In his hospitable home he must often have listened to the talk of the men who ruled India, the soldiers who guarded her frontiers, and the magistrates and police who knew her close interior secrets. As the Chota Sahib, reverentially silent at the tiffin table, adored by the numerous retainers of an Indian household, running wild in the hills or from his playfellows at school, he drank knowledge of India as it were through his skin. What we know best we learn in our youth, without knowing that we learn.

CHAPTER II.

SUBALTERN.

AT MIDLETON COLLEGE—A VERY HECTOR—STAMMERING AND WILL
POWER—GAZETTED—PICKET-DUTY IN BELFAST—FIGHTING IN
BURMA—A STORY OF 'BOBS'—THE INDIAN ARMY—MARRIAGE.

EDWARD DYER is described as a gentleman of old-fashioned and courteous manners, honourable in all relations, kindly, and hospitable.¹ He was, besides, a good-natured man, deeply absorbed in business, and in his home much under the thumb of his wife. Thinking of his sons in the intervals of business, he resolved that Rex and Walter be sent home to school.

So it came about that when Rex was eleven and Walter two years older, the two boys presented themselves on the steps of Midleton College, in the county of Cork, arrayed as they thought suitable for a wild country, in *sola topis*, with *kukris* stuck in their camerbands. They had come to Ireland unattended, the parental system being to give them a cheque-book and a bank credit and let them learn to take care of themselves.

Midleton College, which greeted this odd apparition with unconcealed mirth, stands in its playing-fields some twelve miles from Cork city. It is a

¹ 'Pioneer,' 1st May 1902.

school of good tradition, proud of its charter of the reign of William III., and at the time of the Dyers flourishing under a Headmaster still remembered with affection in Ireland, the Rev. Dr Thomas Moore.

Pride in their school no doubt came later to the two Dyers. The immediate necessity was to defend themselves from a ring of boys who called them ‘ the wild Indians,’ and were much entertained by Rex’s stutter. The daughters of Dr Moore remember ‘ Reggie ’ as a “ shy gentle boy, whom everybody liked, and whose memory, so far as Midleton is concerned, cannot be associated with any but the kindest thoughts.”¹ And this is indeed the impression of every lady who knew him either then or later. He was gentle with women and good-natured with everybody, of a frank, easy, open, sunny disposition. But as at Bishop Cotton’s school, so at Midleton College, when there was fighting to be done, “ he was all pluck,” writes a schoolfellow. “ Amongst this crowd were the usual bullies, one especially, a big chap, who was bullying one Dyer when ‘ Rags ’ (Rex) protested, and the bully went for him too. So, says ‘ Rags ’ to his brother, ‘ there is nothing for it but to fight the brute,’ which the two small boys did, and the bully bit the dust.”²

“ We had a standing feud with the town boys— ‘ Baminines ’ we called them,” continues Canon Hodges, “ and many is the fight we had with them, and in time ‘ Rags ’ became a very Hector amongst

¹ Extract from a letter from Canon Moore, Dundrum, County Dublin.

² A letter to the author from Canon Richard Hodges, Cork.

us, especially when a breach was made in the wall dividing the football ground from the town. Through this sometimes the Baminines used to squeeze when we were playing cricket, and there were Homeric fights with wickets, bats, fists, anything . . .”

In the course of these and other warlike operations, Rex found his stammer a continual rock of offence, made up his mind to get rid of it, went into the woods by himself, and so drilled himself that not a trace of the disability remained. He was determined also not to forget his Hindustani, and every day read a page of some Indian classic, which he had brought with him from Simla for that purpose.

Only a few disjointed and possibly distorted snatches remain of those Irish schooldays—boyish and mirthful memories. There was, for example, an old Irish butler, who passed behind the chairs round the school dinner table. “Are ye dune?” he was accustomed to ask, and if the answer was no, “then,” snatching the plate, “bay dune!” Of Rex’s studies we know little, save that the school specialised in its army class, which was well grounded by the Head in military history; and that Rex successfully resisted all attempts to teach him Latin and Greek, but began to develop a notable aptitude for mathematics.

In their holidays the two boys were left altogether to their own devices, a circumstance which gives a note of independence to those boyish days. The lads decided on their own future. Walter went to study medicine at the College of Surgeons in Dublin, and Rex dutifully followed him.

There again memories are broken and mirthful—chess tournaments, in which game Rex was already proficient ; a seven-mile swim to Black Rock and back ; and a great deal of boxing. This joyous life of the Dublin medical student was for Rex but brief ; he was sickened by the dissecting rooms, and, leaving Walter at the Rotunda, he set out to London to cram for Sandhurst. Ashton, his coach, had high hopes of a First ; but Rex, with the bad luck which dogged him in all such affairs, fell ill of pleurisy on the eve of the examination, and, although he passed well in the next, the illness greatly interfered with his studies. He entered Sandhurst on the 3rd September 1884, passed out in July of the following year—with “ proficiency in Military Law and Tactics,” and was gazetted to the Second Battalion the Queen’s Royal West Surrey Regiment on the 28th August 1885.

The Second Battalion of that famous regiment being then in India, the young subaltern spent some time with the First in Ireland. It may be called a strange chance that among his brother officers was Mr Charles Monro,¹ who had joined the First Battalion in 1879, and was thus by six years his senior. The two young men became friends, and there was a tradition that Dyer gave Monro lessons in boxing. Thirty-five years later these two were to meet again and hold a short and tragic conversation.

By another strange chance, Dyer’s first service was in aid of the Civil Arm. Home Rule for Ireland

¹ Afterwards General Sir Charles Monro, Commander-in-Chief, India, 1916-1920.

was the question in debate, and the factions of Belfast were carrying on the discussion with rivets, brickbats, and guns. In the summer and autumn of 1886 the Queen's were "employed for several months in the difficult and unpleasant duty of picketing the streets to prevent disturbances between Orangemen and Nationalists."¹ The Battalion was popular with both sides, and lost only one man murdered—and then only because he was thought to belong to another regiment not so well liked.

War having broken out in Burma, the Second Queen's were posted to the Third Brigade, Burma Field Force, under Brigadier-General Lockhart; on the 6th October 1886 Dyer sailed for Burma; he arrived on 27th November.

The basins of the Irrawaddy and Salween Rivers, in which the campaign was fought, are a great tract of jungle bordered by hills and intersected by waterways; a region of heavy forest, moist, hot, and unhealthy. The enemy consisted of the broken remnants of King Theebaw's army; gangs of dacoits reinforced from the villages, armed with sniders, jingals, and dahs; elusive, murderous, lying in wait behind stockades, shooting and vanishing, crucifying stragglers and friendlies—a secret and treacherous foe.

It was less a war than a subjugation. The vast country was mapped out into districts, with strong garrisons at central points, from which light mobile columns pushed out through the forests, making

¹ 'History of Second Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment,' by Colonel Davis (1906).

rapid concentric night marches to surprise the stockaded villages at daybreak.

"The word of a scout—a march by night—
A rush through the mist—a scattering fight.

A volley from cover—a corpse in the clearing—
A glimpse of a loin-cloth and heavy jade ear-ring.

The flare of a village—the tally of slain—
And . . . the Boh was abroad on the raid again."¹

The steaming jungle, the tropical sun, mosquitoes, malaria, cholera, were enemies more formidable than the Bohs and their stealthy followers.

The Third Brigade, with its headquarters at Pyimmana, held the district south of Hlaungdet, between the Shan Hills and the Pega Yoma range, and the Queen's, broken up into little columns, like the rest of the Brigade, marched and counter-marched through the swampy jungles round Yemethen and Tounghoo towns on the Sittang River.

For Dyer these operations lasted from 27th November 1886 to 12th August 1887. He had from them a medal with two clasps and a great deal of hard-won experience in map-making, night marching, and surprise attacks.

The casualties of the Queen's were heavier from cholera and malaria than from the dahs and sniders of the enemy. There was besides one unhappy accident which came near to drawing this story to a premature conclusion. Mr Fullerton, a young subaltern of the Queen's, set his horse at a hedge

¹ "The Ballad of Boh Da Thono"—Rudyard Kipling's *Verse* (inclusive edition), p. 293—gives a vivid epitome of the whole campaign.

in the outskirts of the camp at Yemethen; he was thrown, his head struck a stump, and he was killed. Mr Dyer set his horse at the same hedge, was also thrown, hit his head on the same stump, and escaped with concussion.

In August 1887 Dyer was given leave to India, and, going ahead of his regiment, made his way down river to Rangoon. As he was dozing one day in the cabin of the river steamer, he heard cries for help and the sound of a scrimmage from the deck overhead, and, running up the companion ladder, found the crew setting upon his bearer with obvious intent to kill. As he afterwards found, there had been one of those differences on a point of religion which set so many tumults flying in the East. Dyer stood over his servant, and, as his assailants came up, so he knocked them down. The fury of battle infected the whole crew; the serang joined in the fray; but there are few things more formidable in mixed fighting than the well-directed fists of a trained boxer. Dyer scattered them all: some were knocked out, others sought refuge in poop or deckhouse and begged for mercy. Dyer granted terms of peace, left the boat, and went on to India, thinking no more about the matter. Some time afterwards he had notice of a grievous petition made to a civil court by the master and crew of the Irrawaddy steamer, and referred by the court to Army Headquarters. On the advice of his father he drew up a statement of the whole case, which in the end reached the table of the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Frederick Roberts, who had himself recently returned from Burma, and had found

occasion to praise the good conduct of the Queen's. Taking the same view as M. de Tréville on a similar occasion, 'Bobs' read the report with a broadening smile, struck his fist on the table, and exclaimed, "Shah bash!" There is only tradition for this part of the story; what is certain is that the Musketeer heard no more about the case.

In the same year, 1887, Dyer determined to make his career in the army of India, and took a commission in the 39th Bengal Infantry, then stationed at Cawnpore. The regiment had fallen into disrepute, and a veteran, Colonel Edmund Pippon Ommaney, had been put in command to observe and report if it could be pulled together. In the Cold Weather of 1887 the 39th was transferred to Jhansi in the Central Provinces, now a big railway junction, but then a mere camp in the wilderness. From Cawnpore to Jhansi is a distance of a hundred miles, and there being no other way, the ladies marched with the regiment.

Riding from camp to camp in the Indian Cold Weather, in a country well stocked with game, is always pleasant; it was more than usually so for Rex Dyer and his brother subaltern, Edward Willoughby Richards, since they had fallen in love with Colonel Ommaney's two daughters. Camp life continued in Jhansi, where the only refuge from sun and wind and full publicity on the grilling plain was a rocky eminence, on which the young people discovered enchanting prospects, and which many years afterwards was still known in Jhansi as Dyer's hill.

Meanwhile the Dyers had been prospering. About

the year 1880, as the cost of transport was heavy in the Hills, Edward Dyer built a brewery at Lucknow. "There was," according to the 'Pioneer,' "much hesitation on the part of other brewers, who predicted that any attempt to make beer in the Plains must end in absolute failure. But Mr Dyer, confident from his knowledge of chemistry that he was on the right track, held on, and proved in the end that his views were correct." By the use of refrigerating plant he overcame the difficulties of temperature. He not only made beer, he made money.

The Dyers had their house in Simla and their house in Lucknow, and hospitably entertained both stations. The daughters were growing up and marrying, and Mrs Dyer ruled not only her husband but a much wider circle. She spoke slowly to conquer her stammer and firmly to discipline her family, nor did she ever compromise with the candour of her opinion. When, for example, Edward Dyer, recounting his travels and by way of conversation, said that he had once lit a cigarette from a Burma girl's cheroot, his wife expressed her disapprobation in words that laid a damp of silence not only over him but over the whole dinner party.

"That sort of looseness," she said, "is what has peopled Simla with thirty thousand Eurasians!"

Mrs Dyer had conceived a brilliant future for her son Rex. He was to take a commission in a crack regiment of British Cavalry, in which case his father's purse, she was ready to promise, would be at his disposal. When she heard that Rex had decided to stick to the Indian Army and had engaged himself to marry, her opposition was inexorable.

Edward Dyer, if not by inclination then by constraint, was of the same opinion as his wife. If his son persisted in these intentions, he was to be cut off with a rupee.

Dyer got ten days' leave on urgent family business, and fought it out at Lucknow through a whole afternoon. There were hot words and invincible stubbornness upon both sides. That night a miserable young man, unable to sleep, stole out into the garden of the Imam Bara ; and there, brooding over the injury, steeling himself in his wrath, he sat down by the edge of the great water-tank. Presently he became aware of another, also absorbed and obviously unhappy, sitting upon the bank of the pool. It was his father.

They were both shy and undemonstrative men, and the son crept away on tiptoe, without discovering himself ; but next day he used very different language, was tactful, pleading, and persuasive ; promised in particular to forswear the Turf—at that time a besetting sin—and to devote himself wholly to his work. The old man was easily softened ; but Mrs Dyer was less tractable. As Rex had chosen his bed he must lie on it ; he was to be allowed a hundred rupees a month for the first year, after which he was to live by his own exertions.

Dyer, who cared little for money save to spend on his friends, returned happily to Jhansi, bought a lump of pure gold in the bazaar, and hammered it into a ring for his wedding.

On the 4th April 1888, in the camp at Jhansi, Rex Dyer married Anne Ommaney. On that same

day he was appointed Wing Officer on probation, 29th Punjab Infantry.¹ The 39th Bengal Infantry, being, in the words of his father-in-law, beyond hope of salvation, was disbanded, and Colonel Ommaney, his work being done, retired from the service.

The newly married couple went first to Lucknow, where they stayed for a little in the old Rajah's palace, opposite the Chathar Munzil, on the other bank of the Gumti River, which Edward Dyer had bought and made half brewery half living house—a queer place in its decrepit glory of garish stucco,—outside the intolerable heat of April in the Plains, inside a fringe of icicles round the brewing vats. There the Dyers spent a short honeymoon before making the long journey north to Peshawar.

¹ Later the 29th Punjabis, and now 10th Battalion 15th Punjab Regiment.

CHAPTER III.

INDIAN ARMY.

THE DOOR OF INDIA—THE WAY OF THE PATHANS—KOTKAI FORT
—A TUG-OF-WAR—THE SIKHS AND THEIR SAHIB BAHADUR—
A PEEPING TOM.

PESHAWAR is a place of great military importance—the kennel of a watch-dog at the door of India. Its crescent of barracks faces the mouth of the Khaibar Pass, the main road to Afghanistan, and there is only a stretch of naked plain, like the glacis of a fortress, between the barracks and the hills. Those frontier hills, which form a belt four hundred miles long between the Indus and Afghanistan, are peopled with tribes in constant feud among themselves and at frequent war with the British Government. There is besides the populous and turbulent native city, much visited by strangers from Central Asia, perpetually busy with rumours of war, and simmering with the fierce quarrels of its Muhammadan and Hindu communities. Its garrison must be vigilant, with one eye on the frontier and the other on the city; soldiers keep a careful guard on their rifle-racks; sentries go in pairs, for the Pathans have a stealthy way of creeping out of their inscrutable hills, wriggling across the plain in the uncertain shadows of night,

snatching a rifle, stabbing its owner, and vanishing without a trace.

Not only is a rifle of more value than a life in those parts, but the killing of a Christian is counted as a pious act or penance for breach of the tribal law. The year after Dyer arrived, his brother officer, Mr J. C. Stephens of the 29th, was stabbed in the back while standing in a railway station ; ten years later Colonel Le Marchant, shot in the back on the parade ground, fell dying into Dyer's arms.

There were, besides such swift reminders of a brooding danger, the little wars of the frontier. A tribe would misbehave itself, attack some British post, massacre some British party, or make a foray into British territory. The reply would be a blockade, a fine, or, if these measures were ineffective, a punitive expedition. Thus, for example, on the 18th June 1888, two British officers and four men of the 5th Gurkhas were killed near the Agror frontier on British ground. The result was the Black Mountain Expedition. Dyer, then Quartermaster of the 29th, marched with his regiment from Peshawar on the 19th September to join the River Column, Hazara Field Force, and reached Derband, the base of operations, on the 29th. They crossed the frontier on the 4th October : the tribes who opposed them held a rocky ridge between Towara and the Indus extending to the village of Kotkai. In the fighting that followed Dyer, with four or five of his Sikhs behind him, led a rush on Kotkai Fort, leaped the rampart, saw the white skirts of the garrison disappearing over the opposite wall, and

chased them down the hill beyond, to be recalled by bugle and reprimanded for "surmounting an obstacle without knowing what was on the other side." Dyer, if he had not been so good-natured a fellow, might have felt a little sore, for his friend, Alexander Reid, whom he found on his return waving a captured standard, was given the D.S.O.

No need to follow the details of this little expedition—the occupation and destruction of various fortified villages, skirmishing, foraging, road-making, reconnoitring—arduous and dangerous work, in which a mistake might mean a life or the loss of a party. On the 26th November the regiment was back at Peshawar.

The 29th was a composite regiment—four companies of Sikhs, two of Punjabi Muhammadans, and two of Dogras. It had a famous commanding officer, 'Colonel Beddy Sahib Bahadur,' spoken of thirty years after retirement with love and reverence by the Sikhs. Major Reid, who was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel by Brevet for the affair of Kotkai, succeeded to the command in Dyer's time. There is no better test of a regiment than Musketry, and in 1889 Roberts himself said of the 29th, "As regards Musketry the regiment is second to none." Out of eleven annual courses with the Snider rifle, it was eight times first in the list and three times second.¹

The pride and glory of the 29th was its tug-o'-war team, composed altogether of Sikhs, the heaviest

¹ Martini-Henry rifles were issued to the regiment in January 1889, in which year the 29th won the Commander-in-Chief's prize.

and strongest men in the army of India, who make a cult of physical fitness. Every evening the team spent an hour pulling up and down, ever so slowly, a heavy block of iron, fastened to a rope passed over the bough of a tree, holding on and swinging together until their trainer was satisfied. Their great rivals were the 14th, a regiment altogether Sikh, which for that reason had a larger choice of heavy men. In one famous assault-at-arms at Peshawar these two teams met for the final round in the centre of a very much excited and highly speculative gathering of British and Indian officers and men. They dug their naked feet into the hot sand and pulled without relaxing the strain for the space of one hour and nine minutes.¹ When the last man of the 14th Sikhs was hauled over the line, both teams fell in their tracks and lay where they fell. They were carried to hospital, where one died, and it was found that most of them had strained their hearts, and that none of them had any skin left on the soles of their feet. Thenceforth the Government discouraged such practices, it being besides especially laid down that tug-o'-war teams must pull in army boots.²

Big, fierce, black - whiskered, high - turbaned, simple-minded, lion-hearted—such were the Sikhs of the 29th. Dyer was very fond of them, and they were very fond of their 'Sahib Bahadur.' This

¹ Regimental records.

² "The Sahib Bahadur (Dyer) was commanding the reserve. I was working with him on behalf of the regiment as Reserve Instructor. There is no doubt about his being present at the tug-of-war match at that time."—Letter from Honorary Captain Man Singh, M.C., Bahadur, late of the 29th Punjabis.

friendship was tested in two rather serious scrapes, in which either did a signal service to the other.

The first is a little difficult to date, but probably happened when the regiment was going up to join the River Column, Hazara Field Force, in the Black Mountain Campaign. Dyer and his Sikhs detrained at Nowshera, and Dyer hired the only *tikka ghari* in the station yard to carry his baggage. He went back to the train, and returned a little later to see that sole conveyance, commandeered by a portly Indian gentleman, disappearing in a cloud of dust. He ran to a horse-box, brought out his pony, leaped on its bare back, galloped down the road to Nowshera bazaar, came up with the carriage in the middle of the street, and claimed it from its occupant, no less a person than the Tehsildar, who haughtily replied that as he required the vehicle the officer must go without. The officer insisted, the Tehsildar pushed him away, the officer retaliated, the Tehsildar shouted for help.

The people of Nowshera, seeing their Tehsildar having the worst of an encounter with a stranger, set upon Dyer, who in this peril used his fists in a manner surprising and discouraging to those untutored natives. When several had been knocked out, the rest retreated a little, and Dyer fell back on the *ghari*, which was ranged against a wall. There he stood in a posture of defence, while the crowd gathered round in a semi-circle with stones and *lathis*, the Tehsildar in front rather urging them on than himself attacking. Dyer, seeing that he must do something desperate if he were to come out of it alive, with a sudden lunge caught hold of the

Tehsildar by the scruff of the neck, pulled him out of the crowd, and getting his head under his arm, shouted to him to call his friends off. The Tehsildar, poor man, was willing enough to obey, but the crowd were beyond control. *Lathis* came down heavily on Dyer's head and shoulders, his hostage's face duly recording the incidence of the assault. Then one got on the roof of the *ghari* and struck at Dyer with a *lathi* from above, while another, creeping between the wheels, seized his ankles and tried to bring him down. His pith helmet probably saved his life; but he was dizzy with blows and ready to fall when he heard shouts and the rhythmical sound of many feet running in step.

His Sikhs had heard of him leaving the station, and surmising that harm might follow, had come along, the whole Company, at the double all the way from the railway station to the bazaar. When the crowd looked up and saw the rushing column, the fierce whiskers and gleaming eyes of those terrible Sikhs, it melted unobtrusively away.

Dyer used what strength remained to him to get his angry men away without arson and bloodshed. When he got to his tent and stripped, he found himself one bruise from the waist upwards. But his wounds were the least of his trouble. The Tehsildar brought an action against him in the local court, and the lawyer whom he engaged in his defence hinted that the invisible ties between Tehsildar and Indian bench might probably load the scales of justice.

On the day of the action, when the case was called, the Tehsildar stood up, heavily shrouded,

and dramatically drew the veil aside from his puffed and discoloured face.

"And now," said the judge, "we are to deal with this disgraceful assault . . ."

He got no further. Dyer there and then took the case out of the hands of his legal adviser.

"I protest," he said, "against this prejudgment of the case. I ask it to be noted that the court has spoken of a disgraceful assault before hearing the evidence. I refuse in these circumstances to submit to its jurisdiction, and give notice of appeal."

The judge saw that he had committed an indiscretion. If, as Dyer's lawyer believed, he had intended to find for the plaintiff on grounds of friendship and interest, he changed his mind. The case was dismissed.

The second incident occurred when the 29th were moving from one station to another, and Captain Dyer and his wife were travelling by troop-train with his Sikhs and their families. The train stopped at Amritsar: the soldiers rigged up their little forty-pounder tents alongside the train for their women-folk, and went to pray at the Golden Temple, while Captain Dyer hired a *ghari* and took his wife to see the sights of the city.

Leaving the *ghari* outside the gates, they climbed a minaret, from which they looked down upon the city—a busy mart of narrow streets, crowded within its walls, in the midst the Golden Temple throwing its gaudy image on the placid waters of the lake. The soldier's casual yet careful eye may even have seen and noted—as it noted everything—a dusty

open space miscalled a garden—that fatal enclosure, the Jallianwala Bagh.

They descended, and were strolling together with care-free minds when they were suddenly aware of a tumult near-by—yells of anger, cries for help, and the sound of thwackings. Dyer listened, said to his wife, “Go back to the ghari. My Sikhs are in this,” rushed up one of the narrow streets to an excited crowd, shouldered his way through, and found the centre of the trouble—a party of his Sikhs hammering a wretched little man, who lay howling on the ground. The crowd meanwhile, recognising in their victim a native of their city, was gathering courage for a rescue, while Dyer pulled off his men by main force. The soldiers, when they recognised him, stood to attention and saluted.

The crowd by this time was so threatening that Dyer had reason to fear a fight with his Sepoys, so he held up his hand, obtained silence, and made the people a speech. These were his soldiers; he would inquire into their conduct, and if they had done wrong, he would punish them severely.

This quieted the tumult, and Dyer marched his men off to the station. There the soldiers explained very simply the cause of their conduct. They had left their tents unguarded, and suddenly returning had found this rascal peeping at their women through the flaps of their tents. It would have been an offence in any country, but as Sikh women are strictly *purdah*, it was with them an outrage to be wiped out in blood. They had chased the fellow from their camp beside the railway along the road

through the nearest city gate, had caught him, and were beating him, as the Sahib Bahadur saw.

Dyer, concluding from the evidence that their statement was true, held that they had acted under provocation, and did not punish them. Nor did Peeping Tom venture to dispute the justice of his decision.

and casual habit in ordinary life ; always deep in some absorbing subject, paying no heed to the small conventions of society, but forgiven all these little sins by reason of an engaging frankness, a perpetual overflow of merriment and good-nature.

His diversions were characteristic—a love of water and of boats suggest the man of Devon ; and there was besides the love of exploration, of topography, in particular of the hills. In the spring of 1890 his regiment marched from Peshawar to Jehlam, and the sight of the great river gushing out of the Himalayas revived old desires. He easily persuaded his wife to attempt the great range which lies between Jehlam and Kashmir, and having set out on the 15th of April before the passes were open, crossed a Pir 11,400 feet high in the midst of a blizzard, which raised the snow like froth and nearly overwhelmed them before they reached the shelter of a rest-house on the summit.

On the way back another unusual route took them by the Haji Pir into Poonch, where Dyer having struck up a friendship with the sporting young Raja of that little Himalayan State, they all went out on a shooting trip together. Mrs Dyer, in a very slippery howdah on a very high elephant, forded the flooded Poonch, only the mahout and the tip of the animal's trunk appearing in front of her above the turbid waters. In the shoot the tiger broke back through the beaters ; the Raja cursed his men ; the head shikari led up an old fellow, and dramatically throwing aside a cloth which covered his head, revealed a face stripped to the skull by a blow of the tiger's paw as he

passed through the line; a handful of rupees from the Raja; salaams from an old man entirely satisfied.

Then Dyer conceived the idea of going to Jehlam by boat. The Raja arranging the matter with a tribe of Poonchi boatmen, they went dizzily along the flooded stream, through wild ravines, and down no less than eighty-seven rapids, until at the last and worst, at the place called Tangrote, where the Poonch rushes over rocks to join the Jehlam, the boat capsized, and Mrs Dyer was only saved by the prevision of her husband, who at that point had rigged a rope from the boat to a team on the shore.

The adventure inspired Dyer to build a boat, the first of several, with a freeboard of about three inches, in which he explored the shores and islands of the Jehlam.

Regimental work did not satisfy his active mind; he laid his plans for special studies with an eye on the Staff College. On the 10th of December 1890 the Dyers set out on a year's furlough for England; in the spring of 1891 Dyer took a course in field works at Chatham, and passed with distinction in May; in the summer he took a course of topography, and passed with distinction in July; by the 10th of December 1891 they were again in Jehlam. In the spring of 1892 Dyer took his School of Musketry at Chungla Gully, and was awarded an extra 1st Class Certificate. He was Officiating Adjutant and Station Staff Officer in the autumn of that year, and might have been Adjutant but for a condition proposed by the Colonel which he felt himself in

honour bound to reject. The regiment moved to Meerut in January 1893. In October of that year Dyer passed his examination for Captain. On the 28th of March 1894 he took furlough again, went first to Paris to learn French and then to the home of the Ommanneys at West Malling in Kent to work hard on military law and military history. The campaigns of Napoleon were his special study, and by the aid of a graphic series of maps of his own making, with which he covered the walls of his workroom, he so thoroughly mastered these campaigns that more than twenty years afterwards he was able to interpret and illustrate the moves in the Great War by this or that incident in the wars of Napoleon.

His studies, however, were cut short by events on the Indian frontier. An audacious adventurer, Umra Khan, with covert assistance from the Afghans, made an attempt, both bold and subtle, to add Chitral to the little kingdom he had carved out for himself with his sword. That country being under British protection, he collided with a British mission and certain detachments of Frontier and Kashmir troops. The brilliant defence of Chitral Fort only concerns us in so far as it was the occasion of the Relief Force which marched from Nowshera under Sir Robert Low on the 30th March 1895. The 29th Punjabis formed part of the line of communication troops, and afterwards of a fourth brigade formed under Brigadier-General Hammond. Dyer felt himself bound to rejoin his regiment; he returned (alone) and found it at Malakand on the 26th of April; Chitral had meanwhile been relieved by

Colonel Kelly; Umra Khan had fled across the Pamirs; there was little left to be done, and Dyer was able to get leave for his Staff College examinations at Meerut on the 7th of August. He returned to the Relief Force at Chakdara on the 27th of September, but the show was over. In November Dyer heard that he had passed. He sailed for England on the 14th December, and entered at Camberley in January 1896.

We get an interesting account of the Staff College at that time from a letter to the 'Times' signed 'Archimedes,' and written, I understand, by Brigadier-General Sir J. E. Edmonds, Official Historian of the War, who entered Camberley in that same year.¹ Dyer's batch when it entered the College in 1896 included three Majors and five Lieutenants, the rest being Captains, of ages varying from twenty-five to thirty-seven. Four members—Lieutenant-General Sir R. Haking, Major-Generals Sir T. Capper, J. T. Johnston, and Sir L. Stopford—were in after years on the Staff of the College, and Sir T. Capper (afterwards Commandant of the Staff College, Quetta) found that the batch held the record for the highest percentage of officers recommended for Staff appointments when they graduated. It was indeed a year of extraordinary brilliance. Among the soldiers who joined in 1896 were Earl Haig, Viscount Allenby, Brigadier-General Findlay, who commanded the First Divisional Artillery in France, and was killed at the battle of the Marne; Major-General Heath, who commanded the 48th Division, and died of

¹ "Camberley, 1896—A Staff College Batch," 'Times,' 11th January 1921.

exposure in 1915; Major-General Sir T. Capper, who commanded the 7th Division, and died of his wounds after the battle of Loos; Sir Richard Haking; Sir George Macdonogh; Sir W. T. Furse; Sir W. H. Birkbeck; Sir W. Douglas; Sir G. T. Forestier-Walker; Sir L. A. M. Stopford; Major-General Sandbach; Brigadier-General Blair; Brigadier-General Holloway; Brigadier-General H. O'Donnell; Brigadier-General M. E. Willoughby; and other names hardly less well known to the Army. In the batch which joined the year before were Sir Stanley Maude and Sir H. A. Lawrence; in the batch which joined the year after were Field-Marshal Sir W. E. Robertson and Sir Archibald Murray. Sir Henry (then Colonel) Hildyard was the Commandant, and on his Staff were Lieutenant-Colonel G. F. R. Henderson and Major-Generals C. B. Simpson and F. C. Beatson, men who may be said to have made the General Staff as we know it to-day. I gather that Dyer left but a slight impression on this brilliant assembly. He had not come from their schools; he was most terribly shy; the ways and customs of the south of England, its heaths and hedgerows, fox-hunts and country houses were all a sealed book to him. He got along, however, well enough, a quiet, silent, closely and carefully observant fellow, who took in a great deal more than his comrades and teachers supposed. And Colonel Hildyard ended his report of him in these discerning words: "This officer has shown great force of character, and I shall expect to hear of him again."

Captain Dyer passed out of the Staff College in December 1897. In February 1898 he sailed for

India with his family, joined his regiment at Delhi, went with it to Peshawar, and from then on until the spring of 1900 he was Wing Officer of the 29th. The Dyer family¹ occupied the house which was called "the last house in Asia."

Little survives of those hot and dusty years at Peshawar. In 1899 the afore-mentioned accident at hockey, resulting in a broken jaw and badly smashed palate, laid up Captain Dyer for some months. About that time also broke out the great fire in Peshawar City. It was said that the Hindus had set the Muhammadan quarter alight, and had cut off the water supply. That such things were not only said but believed suggests the deeper fires which smoulder always under the surface of life in India—ancient fires of racial hate never to be quenched.

The wooden beams, carved shutters and balconies of the houses being as dry as tinder, whole streets went up suddenly in sheets of flame, and blazing sugar factories burst into blue and violet incandescence. The garrison was turned out under its British officers and sought to rescue the women and children; the Muhammadans stood in front of their blazing doors with drawn swords, preferring rather that their women should die than be seen by the dishonouring eyes of strangers. In the morning Dyer staggered back to his house, black and singed, his eyes crimson, his veins almost bursting. He was found to be suffering from heat-stroke, was packed in ice, and gradually recovered.

¹ Ivon, born on the 8th March 1895; Geoffrey, born on the 29th December 1896. The eldest child, a daughter, was born, and died, in 1880.

In 1900 a Russian General came, under Government auspices, to see the frontiers of India, and Sir Edmond Ellis, then commanding at Peshawar, asked Dyer to chaperone this distinguished stranger. The General enjoyed the hospitality of the Peshawar Club perhaps too heartily, but serious trouble began one morning when he proposed to visit the Khaibar Pass and came from his quarters with a camera slung over his shoulder. Dyer, who was waiting with a landau and strong escort of troops, protested ; the Russian flew into a rage, but Dyer stood firm, and said that he must refer the matter to headquarters. Sir Edmond Ellis solved the difficulty by confiscating the camera. The Muscovite sulked. As he could see nothing at Peshawar, he would go on to Rawalpindi, and Dyer sighed with relief when the train steamed out of Peshawar station. Then came a telegram : the train had arrived at Rawalpindi, but without the General.

The train had stopped for the engine to take in water at Attock, one of the greatest bridge-heads in Northern India, where the railway bridge across the Indus is guarded by a labyrinth of forts concealed in the hilly and desolate country round about. The General, always zealous, and still possibly a little befogged by the hospitality of Peshawar, had seized the opportunity to slip out and investigate, and there he was ultimately found, wandering parched and lost among the sand-dunes. He was taken to Lahore, put into the train for Karachi, and India saw him no more.

About that time the South African War was making a great stir in military India. Garrison

classes were established for officers, and in March 1901 Dyer was made D.A.A.G. for Instruction, and took command of the Garrison School, Chakrata.¹

Thus new interests and a new career were opened out to Captain Dyer. Thenceforth for some years—from 1901 to 1908—he was concerned in the higher education of the Indian Army. Apart from leave and furlough, the only interruption of any consequence was for three weeks in the mid-winter of 1901-2, when he took part in the Waziristan Expedition as Orderly Officer to his friend Colonel Macleod, who commanded a column.

His subjects were Engineering, Topography, and Fortifications; his classes, three a year, of high-spirited young officers, whom Dyer had to govern as well as to teach, and in both governing and teaching, his methods, being human, were successful. Soon after his arrival he found a large quantity of dynamite and other explosives—accumulation of years—stored with no particular care in the centre of the barracks. To use them up, he organised 'explosive picnics,' in which not only the class but the whole of Chakrata took part. The picnic would be on one side of some Himalayan valley; the demonstration on the other. The fuses being doubtful, Captain Dyer always put the match to fougasse or mine, and the party opposite found it entertaining to watch rocks, deodars, and dummies flying into the air.

By such original methods Dyer made a great reputation as instructor, having a way of reducing

¹ A pleasant little Hill station in the Himalayas; in the Cold Weather the School went to Meerut

all problems to a vivid simplicity which fastened them in the minds of his pupils. His fame growing, brother officers would ask him as a special favour to coach them for that crucial test, the 'Q exam.'¹

In the army manœuvres of November 1902, which preceded the first Delhi Durbar, Captain Dyer was D.A.A.G., 4th Brigade, on the Staff of the General commanding one of the armies, which captured the General and Staff of the enemy by following Captain Dyer's tactical plan. He was present also at the Durbar, one of that great throng which received Lord Curzon in silence and greeted the 9th Lancers with cheers.²

Captain Dyer had no thought of what that demonstration foreboded for him, nor had he any liking for the frock-coats and receptions of the Durbar. He was happier in Chakrata telling an endless serial story to his two small sons in the verandah of his little bungalow, a story which drew the officers of the garrison into the house to listen covertly behind the door, a story taken up where left off, in which current events were interwoven in the fable of beasts, prodigies, and monsters—the Tsar of Russia attacked by an octopus as big as a house, protectively swallowed by a fabulous 'arkjaw,' and

¹ An examination in strategy and tactics for promotion to Colonel.

² The treatment of the 9th Lancers by the Viceroy was thought to be unjust. An Indian cook had been brutally assaulted one dark night (9th April 1902) outside the barracks at Sialkote, and died of his injuries. Although the men themselves offered a reward, a military court failed to find evidence to identify the culprits. The military authorities thereupon punished the whole regiment, and in addition the Government of India publicly censured it for lying "under the stigma of concealing a criminal assault leading to the death of a defenceless native." The regiment denied concealment.

rescued by the King's Swordsman, not a hair the worse; an 'underground wallah' of portentous powers—all manner of facts and fancies turned into a tale for the delight of two children.

There was, besides, a problem of exploration which vastly interested Dyer. To the west of Chakrata, a great river, the Tonse, makes its way through deep and dangerous ravines to join the Jumna—there a small stream by comparison—at Kalsi. Its course between Chakrata and the plains is so involved in precipitous mountain and thick jungle that it had never been traced in any detail, and was not even marked upon the maps. To explore this piece of river Dyer built a coracle of split bamboo, covered with canvas, light yet strong, with a floor above the keel, a false keel of tug-of-war rope and gunwales of canvas padded with hay. In this boat Dyer and his step-brother-in-law, Jack Gannon, set out hopefully to find what course the river took between Chakrata of the hills and Kalsi of the plains.

They launched out upon a furious torrent, hurrying into long and frequent cataracts, round which they had to make painful portages. Then they found themselves going dizzily down a chute between precipitous cliffs, and as their pace increased, heard the roar ahead of an unforeseen cataract.

Dyer was in front with the oars, Gannon behind with a double-bladed paddle. By desperate efforts they contrived to reach the side, when within sight of the fall; but as the rock rose precipitously from the river, they had to haul themselves upstream along the bank by the help of bushes and projections of the rock for some hours until at last

they found a place where they could get themselves and their boat out of the water. Then they found the means of circumventing the waterfall by following an overflow branch of the river ; but the way continued so difficult, there were so many portages and climbs to be made, that their provisions ran out while they were still far from the end of their journey. They had reckoned on a voyage of three days and on getting food from the natives *en route*, or by shooting something for the pot ; but neither man nor beast was to be seen, save one green pigeon which, being innocent of cookery, they plunged into boiling water, and kept it boiling, so that it came out as tough as leather.

To make matters worse, Gannon fell ill. They had been by then almost eight days on the way, were nearly starving, and at last determined to leave the boat and their camp in the ravine and make their way up the *khud*. Having found a mountain path, such as is called by the hillmen *pag-dande*, they clambered up, and turning a corner suddenly found themselves faced by a large black bear which blocked the road. The hill rose sheer above and dropped sheer below. There was only one way out : they both fired their shot-guns at once into the face of the bear, which plunged over the *khud* into the torrent below.

Then the explorers followed the path to the top, but found the villages above deserted, and so, starving as they were, they pressed on until at last about three in the morning of the ninth day they stumbled into the bungalow at Kalsi, where Mrs Dyer was very anxiously awaiting them. She had

set a search afoot some days before ; but the innocent and harmless hillmen of those parts refused to go near the Tonse, having seen, they said, *bhoots* ¹ on the stream, and although parties of the South Staffords ranged up and down as near as they could get to the river, they could find no trace of the voyagers.

What Dyer and Gannon were able to report of the Tonse was that its intermediate course was very much longer than the thirty or forty miles which separate Chakrata from Kalsi, that it followed a wide detour, that it included two big waterfalls hitherto unknown, and that it was entirely unsuited for navigation.

¹ Ghosts.

CHAPTER V.

THE RANGE-FINDER.

MUSKETRY INSTRUCTOR—A STEREOSCOPIC RANGE-FINDER—EXPERT
SCEPTICISM—A DISAPPOINTED INVENTOR.

IN India fingers of growing children hold the shears of destiny and bring happy days to a premature end. Early in 1904 Mrs Dyer left with the two boys for England; Major Dyer¹ remained for a year at Chakrata and Meerut, passed his 'Q exam,' was given a year's leave to England in 1905, taught his boys to swim and handle boats at Rosneigr in Anglesey, returned to India in 1906, and was chosen by General Walter Kitchener for accelerated promotion. The General, who admired Dyer's Staff work, promised him command of the 19th Punjabis, but at the critical moment Dyer heard from England that his son Ivon was very ill and not expected to live. On the instant he applied for three months' leave; and although it was granted he was never quite forgiven by the General, who, like his brother, had little sympathy with the troubles of family men. Ivon had gone down with pneumonia, followed by congestion of the lungs, so acute and intractable

¹ Dyer was given his majority in 1903.

that he was given up by the doctors; but rain, following a long drought, brought relief, and when the father arrived the boy was well.

A son saved consoled Dyer for a lost regiment, and he returned to India to take up the post of Musketry Instructor at Rawalpindi and Chungla Gully. The School was under Colonel O'Donnell, who taught the theory, his second-in-command doing the practical work. Dyer there showed himself even more successful than at Chakrata. It was said of him that, given a blackboard and a piece of chalk, he could make anybody understand anything. He was, besides, one of those rare graduates of Camberley who could forget the Army Corps when addressing the subaltern, and with this aptitude for teaching, Musketry had always been his hobby.

He was especially interested in both the practical and theoretical side of a problem which the South African War had brought to the front—the problem of range-finding. The fallacies and shortcomings of the human eye in new lights and environments had cost the British Army so dear that many minds were set at work to find an aid or an alternative. The mechanical range-finder was solving the problem in gunnery practice, and was being adapted for the use of infantry; but for service in the field, as Major Dyer very clearly saw, it had certain disadvantages of size, weight, and construction.

If we imagine the eyes of a man and the object at which he looks as the three points of a triangle, we find two angles at the base of vision which vary with the distance of the object. For the measurement of this angle of vision all mechanical range-

finders are designed, and as the distance between the two eyes makes a base too short to be easily calculable, it is extended laterally by means of prisms and reflectors. This extension of the sight-base involves bulk in the instrument; and it also implies weight, for the prisms must be fixed beyond possibility of displacement and deflection—no easy matter in the rough-and-tumble of field warfare. For these reasons the mechanical range-finder for infantry is of such size and weight as takes a man to carry, and must besides be carried with care, lest a jolt throw out all calculations by dislocating the angles of reflection on which they depend. Moreover, the setting and manipulation of the instrument occupies some appreciable time, so that the Barr & Stroud, the accepted type of army range-finder, excellent as it is, is inevitably an encumbrance to infantry in the field. Major Dyer, with the instinct of the soldier for the swift and ever-changing action of advance and retreat, realised the need not only for accuracy of fire at the place and moment chosen by himself but also at the place and moment chosen by the enemy. He wanted a range-finder which could be carried and used as easily as a pair of binoculars. Incidentally he aimed at economy in cost.

His first experiments were along the accepted mechanical lines. Mr Conrad Beck, the well-known optical instrument-maker, who carried out his specifications, tells me that Major Dyer's first range-finder was an extraordinarily good instrument, light, handy, and serviceable for distances up to about 3000 yards.

But Dyer was not satisfied. He proposed no less than to find substitutes for the lateral extension of the visual base and the manual adjustments of the range-finder. One of his friends tells me that the inspiration came to him as he was looking through the windows of a swiftly moving train. "That," he said suddenly, "is what we want for our range-finder." What he proposed was in fact to apply stereoscopic principles to the problem, an attempt previously made with some success by Professor George Forbes of Edinburgh. Mr Beck informs me that Major Dyer set out upon his stereoscopic career in ignorance of Professor Forbes's inventions, and followed quite independent lines.

I have, besides, Dyer's own notes of his chain of reasoning, from 'a matter of common knowledge,' which he states thus :—

(a) If two images of an object ranged on are cast from opposite ends of a base on to one and the same focal plane, these images are laterally displaced from one another in that plane by an amount which varies inversely as the range.

(b) The image formed by an object glass of an object ranged on is focussed not on the infinity point but beyond it—that is to say, nearer to the observer's eye. The amount of this focal displacement varies inversely as the range.

Dyer, then, proposed to measure not the angle at the base of vision but the displacement of the image on the focal plane. He argued that when the two eyes of the observer look at an object an image is formed in each eye, the combination of these two images being carried out automatically

by the brain. What he proposed to measure was the overlap or displacement of the two images. "I believe," he says in his notes, "the methods I adopt are novel and open up a wide field for thought—a field so wide that there appears to be no finality." It was true: the delicate and intricate mathematical and optical calculations involved in these ideas led Dyer on, as inventors are apt to be led, through endless mazes of absorbing toil. His money and his leisure, from then on until the Great War interrupted all human calculations, were prodigally spent on these researches. He carried on the work under difficulties, sometimes in England, sometimes in India, harassed for lack of means, using all sorts of ingenious shifts—bits of mirror, old safety-razor blades, often having to wait long intervals in India while his designs were carried out in London, and finding so many lines of progress open to him that, as he said, "the mind becomes bewildered in following the different variations of what is really one and the same thing."

By engraving a perpendicular line at a definite point of focus on one eye-piece and a lateral scale on the other, he provided his means of measurement. The mind of the observer brought the images of the object ranged upon towards a coincidence, forming a stereoscopic picture, and this approximation of the one visual image to the other had the effect of moving the lateral measured scale across the perpendicular line. Thus he made a register of that "displacement which varies inversely as the range."

The inventor fixed his index at a focal length of 100 yards, and divided his scale into twenty

equal parts up to 2000 yards, and so adjusted his lenses that the progress of the scale across the index measured the distance of the object ranged upon.

"What I claim as novel in my instrument," Dyer wrote in his draft specifications, "is—

1. The method of sliding a scale whereby equal variations in range are indicated by equal spaces on the scale.
2. The methods whereby not only are the focal points of objects drawn back to the infinity point of focus, or pushed forward to some initial point of focus, but the images are also brought into coincidence."

The measurements of this microscopic scale involved very fine calculations, but Dyer had a natural genius for mathematics; he calculated with an ease and rapidity which astonished the opticians who carried out his work, and he had, moreover, the gift of simple expedients. Thus, as the doubling or folding of the line of sight to get the requisite focal length involved the use of a series of prisms in which a fractional inaccuracy at the beginning led to an enormous magnification of error at the end, and as the grinding of these lenses to the required angle was an expensive business, Major Dyer designed a block of glass so shaped that it could be roughly cut into the number of prisms required, so that any error in the cutting of an angle in one prism would be compensated by the error so formed in its opposite number. The risks of field work were also taken into account. Automatic compensation corrected any slight displacement or any expansion or contraction of metal due to changes of temperature.

The work took so much time and was so heavy a strain upon the inventor's resources that he sought the assistance of the War Office before his invention was complete. He had got so far that by an arrangement of lenses he could illustrate his ideas. He had tested his makeshift on the range at Bisley, and found that practice had vindicated his calculations. His microscopic scale, in particular, had been engraved, and had given accurate results. In these circumstances he applied for leave to give a demonstration. It was no doubt unfortunate that Dyer brought to the Inspection Department at Woolwich an incomplete invention. The young officer of Royal Engineers smiled as the inventor arranged his lenses on the table. "We have," he said, "got much further than that," and proceeded to show his visitor various range-finders of the accepted and related patterns. Nor could he be brought to believe that it was possible to build a reliable instrument on stereoscopic lines.

Mr Conrad Beck thinks that Woolwich was right. "There are," he says, "physiological reasons, connected with the human eye, which make the stereoscopic method unreliable. The results may be satisfactory in nine times out of ten, but the tenth is liable to be completely and unaccountably wrong." The German infantry used a stereoscopic range-finder made by Zeiss for some time, and eventually discarded it for this reason; but it is fair to say that Dyer had a poor opinion of this Zeiss range-finder.

The inventor was bitterly disappointed, but nevertheless persevered. By 1913 he had constructed a range-finder of a handy size, which registered the

distance of any object on which it was brought to bear. To such a pitch was it brought that the observer, following the flight of a bird, could see at the same time the scale moving along the index as it measured the distance in numbered hundreds of yards. In practice, moreover, he found no difficulty in getting the average eye to make a correct reading, nor could he see any serious objection in the argument that the exceptional eye might be unaccountably wrong. The inventor's dream was to bring it down to the size of an ordinary pair of field-glasses, and produce it at a cost of £10. I am in no position to say whether, given the time and the means, the dream could ever have been realised. I tell the story rather to illustrate Dyer's mind and character than to vindicate his invention, and here Mr Beck's testimony is both interesting and valuable. Dyer, he tells me, had an excellent mathematical mind, which was, besides, open to ideas and of strong grasp. The object of all his endeavours was not to make money but to serve his Army and his country. "He was," says Mr Beck, "a high-minded public-spirited man, and it was a great pleasure to work with him." The end of this tale of a range-finder must await the tragical conclusion of our story.

CHAPTER VI.

25TH PUNJABIS.

"NEVER BE A SNEAK"—A CURIOUS SEA-PASSAGE—WHEN THE KHATTAKS GAVE A DANCE—THE REGIMENTAL WRESTLER—A SNAKE MYSTERY—THE GREAT WAR.

I HAVE, relating to this period, one of Dyer's few surviving letters. It is written from India to his son, and may here be given.

IMPERIAL HOTEL,
23-1-07.

"DARLING OLD IVON,—What the —— is the matter with your writing. You must take more care with it, or I shan't be able to read it soon. Sorry to hear about your spill: I hope you were not very much hurt. I am getting very tired of being all alone, so you and Geoff had better hurry up and become soldiers, sailors, engineers, ploughboys, or, but no, not thieves. If mother comes out, you must remember the promise you made me and look after Geoff like a man. You must keep to the right road as far as you can, and remember that it is only by trying hard we can manage this. Have your fun, but never be a sneak.

I am giving you a long lecture, but as you must now depend on yourself for a time I don't think it is unnecessary to warn you, though I feel and believe that both you and Geoff have the makings of men in you. I don't so much care if you do not happen to be very learned when I meet

you next, but I shall be very disappointed if you are not of the right sort.

Enough, dear old boy. Best love. Your very loving

DADDIE."

In 1908 Major Dyer returned to regimental work as Second-in-Command of the 25th Punjabis, then stationed at Rawalpindi—a fine regiment, similar in composition to the 29th. In 1909 the Dyers sailed for England in an Anchor Line boat which made a curious passage. In the Suez Canal she ran into a fog so thick that the Bitter Lakes were packed with hooting and helpless steamers. In the Straits of Messina she was flicked by the tail of the great earthquake, which jolted her engines almost off their foundation plates. In the Straits of Bonifacio she met a blizzard so strong that driving against it she made no headway for twenty-four hours. The Captain, standing on the bridge throughout the gale, never took his hands off his levers, and, or so at least it was currently reported and firmly believed among the passengers, he saved his ship by running full steam ahead up the slope and full steam astern down the slope of the waves. Dyer, who found savour in such things, watched the heroic little group on the tilting bridge—the Captain clenching the handles of his instruments, the First Officer sustaining him and occasionally feeding him with a spoon. Nor did adventure end at Marseilles, for the Dyers were snowed up on their way to Paris ; and when at last they got to Boulogne found a fog which stopped all shipping, so that they had to go to Calais, and there found the weather

so thick that the boat made Folkestone instead of Dover.

A joyous holiday at Bude—working on the range-finder, building a boat for the boys on novel principles out of old packing-cases and canvas,—then back to Rawalpindi to take command of his regiment. Dyer, although he was not much of an office soldier, and could never quite reconcile himself to the routine of administrative work, was strong as a regimental officer in the love and trust which he inspired in his men. And this was partly because he knew them so well that he could appeal to their hearts, to their peculiar pride and special characteristics. And so he worked on the 25th, as he had worked on the 29th, tuning up its companies, as if they were the strings of a violin, until they were tense and taut, each in its different note. I have said that the 25th was a composite regiment, similar to the 29th, of Sikhs, Dogras, and Punjabi Muhammadans; but it was in one respect dissimilar, it had a company of Khattaks.

Now the Khattaks are Pathans, but, unlike most Pathans, they can be trusted. Possibly because they are Sunnis, living in a hostile Shiah world, possibly because they are like the English, open, frank, and jovial, they have always been the one Pathan tribe on which the British officer could rely, when the Border was up, to remain true to its colours. In the troubles of 1919, when, as we shall see, the Pathan Militia, at Afghan instigation, was massacring its officers, the Khattaks made a body-guard round their Sahibs and brought them to safety.

Their district being Kohat and the lower Kurram down to Kalabagh, they lie along an ancient road between Central and Southern Asia, and have something of the Tartar in their customs if not in their blood. In particular their dances are like a Russian ballet, and it was always a great night for Dyer, his officers, and their Memsahibs when the Khattaks gave a dance. The officers and their ladies would stroll along in the evening to find chairs set for them near a great pile of faggots as big as a house, and the Khattaks arrayed in their best, fidgeting a little, yet too well-mannered to begin before their guests were seated. A Khattak in his best is a sight worth seeing—a tall, hawk-nosed, strapping fellow, his eyes darkened with kohl, his black hair oiled and bobbed—he is always combing his hair with a comb he keeps in his *pagari*,—his *pagari* a magnificent creation of blue and white, starched and stiff, bound round a sort of conical clown's hat called a *kullah*, the embroidered point of which makes a peak to the turban, one end of the *pagari* sticking up in a fringed tuft, the other hanging down the back; his sleeveless waistcoat of blue plush and silver embroidery; his white shirt with its tails outside the trousers, which are also spotlessly white and incredibly voluminous—such is the Khattak in his gala dress.

His orchestra now gets going: the tom-tom players beat one end of their long drums with a stick like the rib of an ox, and flick the other end cunningly with their fingers, and the serenai-players puff out their cheeks. How shall we describe the serenai?—oboe and bagpipes in one, a long pipe

with six holes for the fingering, and a protruding flat double-reed through a round disc like the guard of a baby's bottle. The player takes the reed into his mouth, takes a long breath through his nose, distends his cheeks like the bag of a bagpipe, and blows through the instrument while he is taking another breath. He has been dedicated to the art from infancy, and from continuous playing his cheeks have become enormously enlarged, so that he can maintain a piercing note of the same timbre as that of an oboe, and to be heard for miles, for a quarter of an hour on end.

The music starts gently, in steady rhythm of gradually increasing intensity. The dancers take off their pagaris and begin to sway in sympathy. Presently a soloist starts off in a great circle round the fire ; then another, always faster, three steps and a twirl, their baggy trousers and their hair flying out as they gain speed, sinking to the ground like Russian dancers, pirouetting on one foot, until the whole crowd of perhaps two hundred join in, moving slowly in a great circle round the fire, yet each whirling on his own pivot at an incredible pace. Then a thump on the drum, and all stop dead. The Subadar-Major shouts a name, and an acrobat begins a continuous spin round the fire of such pace that he becomes a mere line ; as he stops another begins, the excitement growing meanwhile. Then two Khattaks, each of them armed with two long curved tulwars, which they whirl round their heads, under their armpits, and cross at the back of their necks as they dance ; then a whole crowd of two-sworded dancers join in, all spinning, and the steel

of one seeming to shave the next yet never touching and never clashing.

Logs are thrown on the fire ; sparks fly up in clouds ; then some dancer, drunk with excitement, leaps into the flames and out again, or a dhol-player, tucking his drum under his arm, starts pirouetting on his own account, and the dance dissolves in laughter only to form again the next minute in rhythmical convolutions, untiring, dizzily swift, seemingly endless. The Sahibs and Memsahibs have long gone home ; but not until the fire dies down before the rising sun do the Khattaks retire to their tents.

Dyer's ideal was to have every man in his regiment an athlete, and in particular he took pride in the thews and sinews of Harman Singh, the Sikh regimental wrestler. At the sports which were held at Delhi for the Royal Durbar of 1911, the regimental team won the hockey cup, and none could stand against Harman Singh in the wrestling ring. The 25th happening to furnish the guard-of-honour at the Royal Garden Party, Colonel Dyer came to know the King, whom he was to serve so well, and greatly admired his knowledge of the Army in all its details.

In 1912 the 25th were ordered to Hong-Kong. Before those landward Dogras, Sikhs, and Khattaks went aboard, the Adjutant told them that there might be active service at Hong-Kong, and that any man who was sea-sick would be left behind. In the watches of the night and in the early morning gruesome and dismal sounds came from the men's quarters, yet at 10 o'clock inspection—though some

of the dark faces were greyish green—not a man of them all was sick. Piru, the Colonel's Dogra orderly, sat on the prow day after day looking out on the empty and tranquil horizons of the Indian Ocean. "How," he asked mournfully, "shall I ever find my way back?"

In Hong-Kong, Colonel Dyer nearly caused the death of some of his Sikhs, for when he told them that they must learn to swim, they marched down to the jetty and with one accord plunged into deep water. Dyer found entertainment also in Harman Singh, who had heard of the prowess of the Japanese in his noble art of wrestling, and was extremely anxious to try a fall with them. When he was warned of the dangerous tricks of ju-jitsu, he replied: "Sahib, in India wrestling is a very ancient science. We know all these tricks, but we do not use them. If they try to gouge out my eyes, I shall be ready for them, and"—extending a hand of iron—"I shall twist their heads off." As for the big ones, he said, they were mere fat, and could easily be overthrown by skill and strength combined.

Harman Singh had no difficulty in defeating all the wrestlers to be found in Hong-Kong, and so his Colonel in the end took him to Japan; but the Emperor happening inconsiderately to die, the nation went into mourning, and to Harman Singh's bitter disappointment there was none who dared or cared to wrestle at such a time.

Among General Dyer's papers are some notes of a curious happening which may be set down here. In June 1909, shortly after he joined his regiment, he was informed that a Dogra sepoy named Nantu,

one of the best hockey players in the regimental team, had been bitten by a snake, and was in hospital. He went to see Nantu, and was assured by the medical officer that he was suffering from viperine poisoning, but was on the mend and would recover. In 1910, the regiment being at Multan—and again in June—another case of snake-bite was reported.

“Not Nantu?” Colonel Dyer exclaimed.

The Indian officer on duty, a Dogra, and, as it happened, in command of the company to which Nantu belonged, replied—

“Yes, Sahib. It is very unfortunate; but Nantu, the hockey player, has again been bitten, and must, alas! so continue to be bitten for seven years in succession.”

The Colonel, thinking it at least a very odd coincidence, called in a medical officer who had made a special study of snake-bite, and asked him to examine the patient. This the doctor did very carefully, and reported that undoubtedly the man was suffering from viperine poisoning; and added that the hospital assistant, who had been up with the patient all night, had done well in pulling him round.

When, in the latter end of 1911, the regiment was ordered to hold itself in readiness to proceed to Hong-Kong, Colonel Dyer saw Nantu, and told him that next June he would be out of the power of his enemy, the *sankhia*.

Nantu replied that all things were possible to God.

Before the regiment sailed, Colonel Dyer gave orders that Nantu and his belongings were to be

searched in case he should conceal either snake or snake poison. The search was made, and nothing discovered. Yet the following June, in the regimental quarters at Laichikok, which is on the mainland five miles by water from Hong-Kong, it was reported to the Colonel that Nantu had been bitten by a viper, and when Dyer went to hospital, there, sure enough, was Nantu with his feet cocked up, and the hospital assistant in close attendance. He had, he told the Colonel, been bitten by a *sankhia*,¹ which had taken hold of his instep so viciously that it had to turn completely over to free its fangs. He could have killed the snake, but had been told by an old *pandit*, who happened to pass, that if he killed it he would surely die.

In 1912, as Colonel Dyer was to be in Japan in the month of June, he told the officer in charge of the station hospital at Kowloon the story of Nantu, and asked him to keep the man under close observation, and if necessary under guard, during that month. When Colonel Dyer returned to Hong-Kong he was told that Nantu, despite all precautions, had been bitten—in hospital!

At the club Colonel Dyer consulted Colonel Rennick of the 40th Pathans, an authority on the Dogras and their country. Colonel Rennick assured him gravely "that there were such men"—bitten for seven years in succession by the same kind of snake.

Colonel Dyer left the regiment with the mystery unsolved. After the war he heard that Nantu had completed seven years of snake-bite and survived,

¹ *Echis carinatus*, an adder common in the Lower Himalayas, to which Nantu ascribed the bite

"as a living proof that such things do happen in India." But it is evident from his notes that Colonel Dyer remained sceptical. For, as he points out, if Nantu's tale were true, then the *pandit* as well as the *sankhia* must have followed the sepoy from India to China.

As Mrs Dyer was at that time an invalid, and her state of health grew steadily worse, Colonel Dyer applied for a year's leave, and took his wife home by way of the Pacific and Canada. They spent most of 1913 in a small house at Woking and then at Hampton, Dyer deeper and deeper in his range-finder—his workroom a litter of prisms and patent specifications. Then at the end of the year came separation. Mrs Dyer went into a nursing home at Bournemouth; her husband returned to Hong-Kong. When war broke out on the fourth of August 1914, Colonel Dyer was on privilege leave in Japan. He hastened back to Hong-Kong, and telegraphed to his wife: "Both boys join at once." Ivon, who had just left Uppingham, had already volunteered. Mrs Dyer let him go; but Geoffrey, who was still at school, was in her judgment too young. He might join up, as he did, when he was eighteen. In the meantime Colonel Dyer, whose term of command had come to an end, bade farewell to the 25th, and set out for India. On the 13th December 1914 he arrived at Rawalpindi.

CHAPTER VII.

PLOTS AND STRATAGEMS.

TRAINING RECRUITS FOR THE WAR—A FORMIDABLE CONSPIRACY
 . —A CHAIN OF MURDERS—SEDITION NIPPED IN THE BUD—
 GERMAN PLOTTING IN KABUL—THE RAIDERS OF THE SARHAD.

SIR GERALD KITSON was in command at Rawalpindi, which, besides being the headquarters of the Division, is a great base and centre in the defences of India, and Colonel Dyer was his chief Staff Officer. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, at that time Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, was busily raising armies in the defence of the Empire, in which cause during the four years of war he supplied 350,000 fighting men. The Indian princes and the State of Nepal, whom the infallible test of danger showed to be our good friends and allies, were no less zealous in our cause, a notable contrast to the Indian politicians, who made our trouble their opportunity. During 1915 Colonel Dyer was part of the machine which turned these recruits into disciplined soldiers.

"He was," says Sir Gerald Kitson in a letter to the author, "an excellent staff officer, and, having been through the Staff College, was thoroughly trained. He was a very genial, pleasant

companion, full of fun and humour, and I was very fond of him."

In this good work the authorities were hampered by the development of a formidable conspiracy. There had always been in India a faction implacably hostile to the British Raj. In particular, those Chitpavan Brahmins who had ruled the Deccan in the decline of Mahratta power, and had been overthrown by British arms in the early part of the nineteenth century, devoted their great abilities for intrigue to this end. The Abhinav Bharat of Nasik was founded on the model of the Russian Anarchist Secret Society; the Bhawani Munder, founded in 1905, glorified Nationalism under the ominous shadow of Kali. Such organisations spread themselves over India from Bombay to Calcutta. There was one in Amritsar in 1907 called the Shining Club, which shone under a bushel, and did not shine very long. One of its chief members was the notorious agitator Ajit Singh, and another Rattan Chand or Ratto, of whom we shall hear later. The partition of Bengal, innocently undertaken by the British Government for administrative purposes, was used by the agitators to establish the movement firmly in Eastern India. It was an agitation which took colour from the race and religion of the districts into which it spread, yet had a certain unity of purpose and possibly of command.¹ The murders

¹ Thus on the 2nd September 1909, police search being made in a Calcutta house, a document of "General Principles" was discovered. The first was the "organisation of all revolutionary elements in the country so as to allow the concentration of all forces of the Party where most necessary"; the second, a "strict division," so that persons working in one branch should not know what was done in any other; the third,

of Mr Rand and Lieutenant Ayerst at Poona in 1897, of the Kennedy ladies in 1908, of Mr Jackson and Sir Curzon Wylie in 1909, the Howrah Plot of 1910, the Dacca Plot of 1911, the attempt on the life of Lord Hardinge in 1912, were not isolated or spontaneous crimes, but red beads on the string of an organised and continuous conspiracy.¹

Before the war the Germans worked to use these and other discontents for their own purposes, and they had the good fortune just when war was breaking out to have a weapon made to their hands. Some thousands of Sikh emigrants who had attempted to settle in California and Western Canada suffered under the disabilities of the local immigration laws, hardships cunningly used by the conspirators to work up those brave and honest peasants to a state of desperation. Their attempt to force a landing at Vancouver failed just before war broke out, and the fury of the Sikhs was cleverly diverted against the British Government. In September and October 1914, companies of those desperate men began to arrive at Calcutta and other Indian harbours. Many were stopped at the port of entry ; some were

severe discipline even to the extent of " sacrificing members " ; the fourth and fifth, secrecy in the skilful use of men ; and the sixth, " a gradual development of the action—*i.e.*, the Party ought not at the beginning to grasp all branches, but to work gradually." For instance :—

- (1) The organisation of a nucleus including many educated people.
- (2) Spreading ideas among the masses through the nucleus.
- (3) Organisation of technical means (military and terroristic).
- (4) Agitation.
- (5) Rebellion.

¹ See Report of the East India Sedition Committee, 1918, over which Mr Justice Rowlatt presided, for an historical and fully documented account of these underground activities.

imprisoned or interned ; others kept under watch in their villages ; but thousands evaded the authorities and swarmed over Northern India robbing and murdering. From October 1914 to September 1915 one outrage followed another. " All over the Central Punjab police were murdered. . . . Loyal citizens were shot down or killed by bombs ; gang robberies, sometimes with murder, were carried out to raise funds for the cause ; several attempts were made to derail trains or blow up bridges " ; a railway picket near Amritsar was murdered for its rifles ; plans were prepared to seize the arsenal at Ferozepore and the magazines at Lahore ; and " persistent attempts were made, not . . . without success, to tamper with the Indian troops in at least a dozen stations in the Punjab and the United Provinces." Two of the chief conspirators, Rash Behari, a Bengali, and Pingle, a Mahratta Brahmin, with their headquarters at Amritsar, made dangerous progress among the Sikh troops, and in various cantonments other agents of the conspiracy arranged for the massacre of officers, the seizure of arms and munitions, and a general rising. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who was carefully watching the movement, struck just before the conspirators were ready. The rebel headquarters at Lahore were raided, and thirteen of the most dangerous leaders captured, " with all the paraphernalia of arms, bombs, bomb-making material, revolutionary literature, and four rebel flags." Pingle was arrested at Meerut with a collection of bombs sufficient to blow up a regiment, tried, and duly hanged ; eighteen troopers of one tainted

Sikh regiment were sentenced to death, and twelve were executed.¹

The Defence of India Act was passed in order to help the authorities to re-establish law, but found too weak for the forces arrayed against it; special tribunals were set up to try the legion of accused, and although in many cases witnesses and police were murdered, by August 1915 the Ghadr Rebellion was crushed.²

Under the vigorous guidance of Germany, however, an even more formidable plot was rapidly developing. Between the Pamirs and the Sahara is a belt of Muhammadan states which Germany worked to bring into the war by what was called the Pan-Islamic movement. The British Government, by a reversal of policy at Constantinople, had already made her a present of Turkey, the centre or pivot of the line. With the Turks as allies the Germans had hopes of Afghanistan, a State not only warlike, but with great influence among the fighting tribes of the Indian frontier. To precipitate the Afghans and their kindred upon India would have made a formidable diversion, and there were besides in India itself sixty million Muhammadans who might be turned from their allegiance to the standard of their Prophet.

The British had a good friend in the Amir Habi-

¹ In Singapore the Muslim wing of an Indian regiment mutinied, massacred their officers, ran amok in civil lines, and were finally defeated and rounded up by a mixed force of volunteers and bluejackets. That affair, which took place in the early days of 1915, was evidently part of the same Ghadr conspiracy.

² This account of the Ghadr conspiracy is summarised from chap. xiii. of 'India as I Knew It,' by Sir Michael O'Dwyer.

bullah ; but the Afghans themselves and their mullahs were traditionally hostile to that British power which stood between them and their natural prey. From that turbulent and lawless region nothing was certain but danger. There is an Indian proverb—Trust a snake before a harlot ; trust a harlot before an Afghan.

The Indian Government had, therefore, a strained and anxious eye on Kabul, and was aware of certain constant and stealthy movements to and fro between Turkey and Afghanistan across Persia. There was, indeed, a fatal weakness in the German plan : there was no road between Constantinople and Kabul. If the German Missions skirted along the north of Persia, they were involved in mountains and dangerously close to Russia. If they took a more southerly route through Khorasan, or by way of Birjand, there was the Great Salt Desert to cross, and, moreover, any of those roads led them into the Hazara country round Herat, and Hazaras being Shiah, are not good friends of the Sunni Afghans. The Germans, therefore, took a circuitous line by way of Kirman to the south-east of Persia so as to enter the south-western corner of Afghanistan. There they had to pass through a wild frontier region called the Sarhad, and to win over the Sarhadis thus became an object of German policy.

The Sarhad is inhabited by certain Highland clans, who supplement an honest livelihood by raiding into Persia for carpets, camels, cattle, and women. As they border on Baluchistan, and count themselves independent of Persia, they had found it convenient to be on terms of friendship with the

British Government, and it was British policy to be on good terms with them. The German agents, however, contrived to seduce these tribes from their ancient friendship. Partly by bribes and partly by representing the Kaiser as the Khalifa, they not only secured a free passage through the Sarhad, but persuaded the Raiders to attack the convoys which supplied the British posts along the frontiers of Baluchistan. German missions, arms, and money passed into Afghanistan, and thence throughout the North-West Frontier and into India itself. Thus a genie was coming out of a bottle the mouth of which was the Sarhad.

How to cork that bottle was anxiously considered by the Indian Government. The Sarhad lay at the far end of Baluchistan, a mountainous and desert country, sketchily held. Rail-head was then at Nushki, some distance beyond Quetta, and between Nushki and the Sarhad lay three hundred miles of camel track flanked by the mountains of Afghanistan, subject to raid from both sides, and frequently obliterated by drifting sand. Nevertheless, in 1915, a small force consisting of one regiment of Indian cavalry, four pack guns and a battalion of Indian infantry was sent out to the Perso-Afghan frontier and based on Seistan. This little force, strung out over some hundreds of miles of frontier between Robat and Birjand, had as its main business to keep the southern half of the Perso-Afghan frontier intact (the Russians keeping the northern half) and to stop Germans, ammunition, machine-guns, and wireless from entering Afghanistan. Their adventures would make a story in itself, as, for example, the capture of

"Winckelmann," a German Staff Officer with a caravan of donkeys laden with gold, and a cavalry march by Colonel Claridge and his Rajputs of ninety-four miles in twenty-four hours in weather so cold that when they halted they built a fire between each horse; but these and other notable yet unnoted incidents of war go beyond the scope of this book. Sufficient to say that at the beginning of 1916, the Germans, having occupied Kirman, and got the Sarhadis on their side, were becoming altogether too formidable to be dealt with on the lines of scattered posts. Thus it was that towards the end of February 1916, General Kirkpatrick, Chief of Staff at Delhi, sent for Colonel Dyer and gave him orders "to take charge of the military operations in South-East Persia."¹

¹ My chief authority in the chapters which follow is General Dyer's own narrative, dictated to his friend and amanuensis, Miss Stout, and published under the title 'The Raiders of the Sarhad,' by H. F. and G. Witherby (London, 1921). But see also 'General Dyer's Operations in Eastern Persia' (F.S.R., chap. ii., vol. II., para. 146), by Lieutenant-Colonel E. H. Landon, late of the 35th Scinde Horse. I am also indebted to Colonel Claridge, late 28th Light Cavalry, and Major E. P. Yeates, another retired officer of the Indian Army.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SARHAD.

BY MOTOR TO SEISTAN—A FRIEND IN THE NIGHT—THREE TRIBES
OF RAIDERS—THE TRICKING OF JIAND KHAN—THE ADVANCE
GUARD.

It was a mission which demanded haste. Colonel Dyer stopped an hour at Rawalpindi to pack his kit, and went by train to Quetta, taking with him his devoted servant, Allah Dad, a motor-car, and General Kitson's chauffeur, an excellent fellow named Allan, of the 9th Middlesex Regiment. At Quetta, our great military station in Baluchistan, Colonel Dyer was given more detailed instructions, and went on to Nushki; at Nushki he had a telegram "from a high political official at Quetta" that the Baluch raiders had cut the lines of communication and were right across his road. The telegram was almost an order not to proceed; but "as explicit military instructions were to reach Robat . . . as well as the Sarhad with the least possible delay, I saw no reason for altering previously made plans."

Among his papers there is a letter in pencil from Nushki of the 25th February 1916 to his wife: "Just a line to let you know that I am off to Seistan from Nushki, and you may not hear from me for

many a long day. My address will be O.C. Troops, Seistan, Robat, Baluchistan. All has been arranged in a great hurry, and I am delighted to say that at last I shall feel that I am doing something. I am very fit indeed, and hope I may remain so. Best love, dearest, to yourself and boys." The letter goes on to say that he had sent her furs and a jewel from Rawalpindi, and to enumerate his holdings in shares and property and his life insurance—such a letter as a soldier might write knowing the risks and chances ahead.

Colonel Dyer started on the journey from Nushki to Robat on the morning of the 27th February 1916, and as the distance by the road they meant to follow was some 375 miles, he estimated that it would take five days. The road was bad beyond expectation; they spent laborious hours digging their way through heavy sand drifts or making detours to avoid large shallow pools of water. At one awful moment Allan discovered that he had left his petrol tap turned on and had lost some fourteen gallons; but by what seemed a miracle they found in the Dak bungalow at Yadgar a row of full petrol drums—"petrol in the desert, petrol where one would as soon have expected to find a Bond Street jeweller!"—which saved the situation.¹

At nightfall of the third day they arrived at the post of Mushki-chah, to find the road blocked with camel caravans, laden with food for our scattered posts along the frontier, and afraid to advance because of reports that the country ahead was in

¹ The petrol, says Colonel Landon, had been dumped by a car which had tried (and failed) to reach Seistan.

the hands of the Raiders. Colonel Dyer resolved to go forward by the little used Webb-Ware route to Saindak; they pushed along from before dawn until nightfall, getting deeper and deeper into a region of nullahs or rocky ravines until at last they were brought to a stand. Then as Colonel Dyer was looking for the road with a hurricane lamp, he stumbled upon three armed men, one of whom answered his challenge with the words, "I am Idu of the Chagai levies, friendly to the British Government."

These men had seen the motor-car's powerful headlights, and had jumped to the conclusion that they came from one of those German *hawaijihaz*, or airships, of which the rumour had penetrated even into those parts. One of the men had levelled his rifle at Dyer, and had only been prevented from shooting him by Idu, who said, "Nay, it is but one man. Let us wait and see who he is."

Here was a stroke of luck. Idu was not only a havildar in the Chagai levies, a local force raised by the Indian Government, but was one of the chief men of the Rekis, the only one of the four tribes of the Sarhad which remained faithful to the old friendship. He was besides, as Colonel Dyer was to find, a fellow of notable courage and resource, staunch and sagacious, who knew every yard of the country and every one of the Raiders, their weak points as well as their strength. From that moment Idu became Colonel Dyer's right-hand man in the Sarhad. "Never once," says Colonel Dyer, of Idu, "in all the months to come did I find his wit and humour fail."

Idu's first service was to pilot the car—the first ever seen in that country—to the mud fort at Saindak. Next day they went on to Robat, where Colonel Dyer found the officer whom he was to relieve—a very sick man—and Major Landon of the 35th Scinde Horse, one of the three Intelligence Officers employed by the Indian Government in Persia. With their aid he took stock of the situation.¹

At one time, years before, when Russia seemed to threaten India by her advance on the Oxus, it had been British policy, as a wide counter strategic move, to turn the south-west corner of Afghanistan by a chain of posts as far as Robat, Nasaratabad, and Birjand. Those posts were now being held by the little force mentioned in our last chapter on a front of three hundred miles. The Raiders had contrived to isolate them and put them almost in a state of siege by holding up and looting the camel caravans on which they depended for their supplies.²

The mountainous border region of the Sarhad, from Jalk in the east to Galugan in the west, is inhabited by three tribes of Raiders, the Gamshadzais in the east, the Yarmuhammadzais in the centre,

¹ "I have read through the General's 'Raiders of the Sarhad' again, and, of course, he minimises his own actions. For instance, the journey across the desert to Robat was an amazing feat, through the most difficult country and without a guide. At that time the road was practically non-existent, and obliterated by very big sand-hills."—Letter from Lieutenant-Colonel Landon to author.

² General Dyer's own kit and charger, which were following behind under an escort of a few levies, were caught by the Raiders three-quarters of the way across. They killed some of the levies, shot the General's charger, looted his kit and also some spare tyres, and after stripping and terrifying the syce out of his wits, returned him to the line of communication.—Landon, F.S.R., vol. ii. chap. xi.

and the Ismailzais on the west, which were at that time under the leadership of three redoubtable chiefs, Halil Khan, Jiand Khan, and Juma Khan. Of these three, Jiand Khan, chief of the Yarmuhammadzais, was the eldest in years, and was acknowledged—when they thought fit—as overlord by the other two. His fort of Khwash—a word which means sweet water—was a centre of cultivation and the capital or centre of the Sarhad.

Each of the three tribes was about a thousand families strong, and each of them could muster from one to two thousand fighting men, chiefly armed with Mauser rifles. Nomads, living in camel-hair tents and owning many camels, slaves, and herds of sheep and goats, by faith Muhammadans of the Sunni sect, by race Arabs, by nature hardy and adventurous, by appearance “a fine-looking set of men, slim and graceful, with fine intelligent faces and aquiline features,” their women often good-looking, and going unveiled—such in brief outline are the people of the Sarhad. They are called Raiders, because they live by raiding not only travellers but villages and towns, as far as Meshed, in the north of Persia, and, as they “know no fear and seldom show mercy,” they are the terror of that country. Their own, the Sarhad, is very arid, sandy, sparsely cultivated, and crossed by range upon range of bare volcanic hills, with rugged peaks and precipitous sides, one of which, the Koh-i-Taftan, rises to a height of over thirteen thousand feet.

It was evident from the outset that the Raiders were committed to the other side; but Colonel Dyer, in order to force them to declare their policy,

summoned the chiefs of all the clans to a Durbar at Kacha; on the appointed date only the Rekis appeared. They are a smaller tribe than the other three, and were, as we have seen, still friendly to the British Raj.

As Jiand, Halil, and Juma had all been duly served with summonses to appear and had been given ample time to come, Colonel Dyer saw that there was nothing for it but to bring them to subjection. He therefore returned to Robat to plan out his campaign, and as he found his rank inadequate to his design, he sent a telegram to Simla asking to be made a General.¹ In the meantime he made Landon his Brigade-Major, and set to work to organise a mobile column.

As he knew that in the absence of adequate force he must rely on bluff and audacity, he called in his friend Idu and asked him to spread the report that a great and famous British General had just arrived with five thousand fully armed troops, that the General was greatly incensed at the disobedience of the chiefs in not coming to Kacha, that he was starting in great force to attack them, and that he was planning to march first against Halil Khan in the direction of Jalk.

As for the column, it was made up of what he could obtain from the garrisons of Nasaratabad, Robat, and Kacha—two mountain guns, seventeen sawars of the 28th Light Cavalry, nine trained soldiers, sixty-five raw recruits and two maxim guns

¹ The telegraph line across Persia, connecting Europe with India, was never cut by the Raiders, owing to superstitious fears of the *Sheitans* in the wires, save once (in April 1916) when the damage was repaired by Colonel Claridge a few hours after it was done.

of the 12th Pioneers, about fifteen of Idu's Chagai levies, and about fifty unarmed Rekis.¹

With this exiguous force and a long train of about six hundred camels carrying supplies, Brigadier-General Dyer, as by that time he was, struck camp at Ladis on the 8th of April 1916, and marched south upon Khwash.

The first day they made eighteen miles, the second the scouts reported the enemy ahead. It was Jiand Khan and his force of about two thousand men, encamped on some low hills running out in spurs from the Koh-i-Taftan.

General Dyer, who had to admit to himself that Jiand had taken up a strong position, set his force in battle array. The sixty-five untrained infantrymen were given charge of the camels, the mountain guns brought up to some low hills on the left, the two machine-guns placed in a favourable position in the centre, and the cavalry moved forward under cover to the right.

In the meantime a man mounted on a camel was seen coming from the enemy's camp carrying a flag of truce. As he drew nearer he was recognised as Shah Sawar, a relative of Jiand's and a famous chief. He announced that he had come from Jiand Khan to invite the General to a conference. If the General Sahib, accompanied by only one man, would

¹ Major E. P. Yeates (then a Lieutenant in the 12th Pioneers), who had been in command at Kacha, served under General Dyer during the rest of his campaign. "On one occasion," says Major Yeates, "the only British officers we were able to muster for the column he took out were the General and his Brigade-Major, with myself as the sole regimental officer. This surely is the only case in the British Army of a force in which the Staff have outnumbered the regimental officers by two to one." See article, "General Dyer: Some Recollections," by E. P. Y. in 'Blackwood's Magazine' for December 1927.

come half-way, Jiand, also accompanied by one man, would meet him and discuss the situation.

Now it was obvious to General Dyer that Idu's spies had done their work well. Jiand Khan asked for a parley because he supposed that behind the General was an army of five thousand men; the dust raised by the long train of camels had heightened the illusion. If the negotiations were granted the bluff would be discovered and the advantage lost. The General therefore replied haughtily and angrily that he scorned such a proposal from a scoundrel like Jiand; that he was coming not half-way but the whole way, and at once; that he would give the messenger time to return; that he would then fire a shot in the air as a signal that hostilities had begun, and would proceed to wipe out Jiand Khan and his Yarmuhammadzais.

Shah Sawar was much impressed. He beckoned to the man who had come with him, sent him with the message to Jiand, and himself begged to remain with the General—better be a prisoner than join in hopeless battle against five thousand troops.

General Dyer had taken a position which masked his lack of men.¹ While the messenger was racing back to Jiand, he directed Lieutenant Hirst to make a show of his seventeen cavalymen and feint at Jiand's left flank and rear. The big horses had a brave appearance as they topped the hills; General Dyer ordered a shot to be fired; the cavalry moved rapidly to the right; the machine-guns opened fire; the infantry—nine trained men and a handful of

¹ "The shallow and wide nullahs descending from the Koh-i-Taftan crossed our line of march like huge ocean waves, very good objectives for advancing by bounds and equally good for a retirement."—Lieutenant-Colonel London

Chagai levies—rushed forward in the centre. General Dyer threw everything into the attack.

They were met by a fairly rapid though ill-aimed fire; but the machine-guns got the range of the enemy's front line, and the cavalry working slowly over broken ground, contrived to turn the enemy's left flank. Then panic seized the Raiders. Jiand, persuaded that the van of a great army was bearing down upon him, mounted his camel and told his men to save themselves, and his force scattered and fled in sudden terror. Dyer and his officers, being mounted, pressed hotly on the fugitives, firing their revolvers into the press; but so swift was the flight that there was soon none left to chase. Dyer and Landon saw as they looked round that they had won an almost bloodless yet signal victory. Jiand Khan, a leader of great reputation not only with his own tribe but throughout those parts, had been put to such a rout that it would take some time to recover his authority and collect his forces. It was a blow that would resound over the whole of the Sarhad.¹

¹ Another such resounding blow was struck on the night of the 13th-14th April 1916 by a small force consisting of a few local Scistan levies, some thirty sepoy of the 19th Punjab, and eighteen lancers of the 28th Light Cavalry under Captain F. James—commanded by Captain Wise of the 27th Light Cavalry. This force was settling down to bivouac in a ravine in the mountains when it received news of a force of 300 Raiders under Juma Khan crossing the Lera Dik plain below. Captain James immediately set out with his lancers, overtook them, and by firing first from behind one ridge, then galloping round under cover to fire from behind another, and so on, brought them to a stand, and gave them the impression that they were surrounded by a large force. This gave Captain Wise time to come up with his infantry; the Raiders were surrounded and heavily punished, and 2500 sheep and camels taken. Among the loot were found boxes of .303 ammunition and the kit of a British officer, whom the Raiders had killed the day before.

Audacity and resource had led to this success. Idu's spies, assuming the fear of fugitives, had scattered panic and rumour as they went, and by spreading the report that Halil Khan was to be attacked had prevented a combination of the tribes in defence of Khwash. Jiand had not only been taken in detail, but with his mind prepared for the designed effect. The speed of Dyer's advance gave no time for the enemy to discover what contemptible reality lay behind portentous rumour. A train of five hundred camels, seen at a distance in the dust of their march, was well calculated to help the imposition, and the feint of a cavalry threat on Jiand's flank and rear precipitated that psychological storm which it was the General's purpose to produce.

General Dyer knew well, however, that the position was dangerous; if the enemy discovered his bluff it could still unite and utterly destroy his little army. Moreover, he had just heard that Juma Khan and his Ismailzais had attacked and inflicted heavy loss on a small British force to the west of Robat. There was no time to be lost. Dyer's only chance was to strike at once while Jiand's tribe was still scattered and demoralised.

The column accordingly pressed hard on the track of the fugitives, and in the course of this pursuit reached Kamalabad, the winter quarters and cultivated ground of the Yarmuhammadzais. The place was deserted. Jiand was safe in the Morpeish Hills, which rise precipitately ten thousand feet out of the fertile valley.

All the wheat and barley on which the tribe depended for its bread supply being then green and

at its full growth, General Dyer held the life of the people in hostage. He sent a message to Jiand Khan that if he surrendered himself at once he and his followers would be spared ; if he refused five hundred camels would be let loose upon his crops. In the meantime the old people and women of the tribe, who were found to be in hiding near-by, were brought in, reassured, and given food, water, and shelter.¹

Before the time limit ran out Jiand sent a message of surrender, and shortly afterwards arrived on a camel with a few attendants. He was a fine old man,² but broken with humiliation and also with grief, for among the eleven of his men who had been killed on the field was his favourite son.

The General treated Jiand courteously, condoled with him on the loss of his son, pointed out his folly in being false to his ancient friendship with the British Raj, told him that all the German stories he had heard were lies, and demanded the return of all Government camels and stores, as well as the General's own kit, which had been captured between Nushki and Robat.

While they were talking the General noticed that Jiand kept looking about in evident curiosity. At

¹ " He had a great ability for understanding the point of view of the tribesmen he was fighting, and in general he had a great sympathy with them. His humanity was very marked, and caused wonderment in the tribes. For example, his refusal to bombard (with two guns) the remnant of the Yarmuhammadzais who had taken refuge in a bolt hole in the Morpeish Hills after their first defeat, and whose women and children could not climb out."—Letter from Lt.-Col. Landon to author.

² According to General Dyer : according to Lt.-Col. Landon, Jiand was " a striking figure, very like a nasty unclean vulture."

last the old man could restrain himself no longer. Where, he asked, was the great army which had conquered his own? The General replied that he had come on with the advance guard; it was not necessary to bring all his men merely to take Jiand prisoner. They had yet to capture Khwash.

CHAPTER IX.

CONQUISTADOR.

SURRENDER OF KHWASH—PRISONERS ON PAROLE—A MERRY
CAPTIVE—BROKEN PLEDGES—A LOYAL KHAN.

JIAND KHAN swore on the Koran that neither he nor any of his tribe would ever again raise a hand against the British Raj, and was not disarmed, but kept on parole under open arrest. Next morning General Dyer with his whole force set out for Khwash, thinking the capture of that stronghold the more urgent as he had heard that Halil Khan, with his Gamshadzais, was advancing to the succour of Jiand.

After a march of sixteen miles they arrived at the fertile plateau on which the fortress stands and called a halt. The night before General Dyer had sent a messenger to Muhammad Hassan, who was in command of the place, that he had defeated the Yarmuhammadzais with great slaughter, that Jiand Khan and Shah Sawar were prisoners in his hands, and that unless Khwash was surrendered by twelve noon, it would be blown to the skies. He now waited somewhat anxiously for the result of this message, and was relieved to see a messenger with a white flag coming towards the bivouac. It was

the herald of Muhammad Hassan who presently arrived. He had heard all about the defeat of his chief, recognised the folly of resistance, and was willing to surrender both himself and the fort.

The Yarmuhammadzai garrison marched out as General Dyer marched in to take possession. It was a strong place, some seventy yards square, with two gates in the loopholed outer walls which were about thirty feet high, and with towers at the four corners, one of which rose fully fifty feet. If it had not been surrendered it would have been hard to take with such forces and artillery as the General could command.

There were other fruits of victory in store. When Jiand Khan was fleeing beyond Kamalabad, he had naturally exaggerated both his losses and the forces which had inflicted them. Halil Khan had therefore heard that Jiand had lost seven hundred men, and when the further news came to him that the paramount chief was a prisoner in the hands of the enemy, he thought it wise to meet trouble half-way. That evening he arrived with fifty of his men, all armed with Mauser rifles, and made formal surrender.

Halil Khan, as the General saw at once, was a fighting man—resolute, intelligent, with a “peculiarly alert look.” He was “particularly anxious to learn how we had managed to defeat Jiand, and was curious to know the whereabouts of the vast British forces.” General Dyer left him guessing, and counted himself fortunate to have the submission of such an enemy.

The snowball of armed prisoners on parole was

now growing dangerously large, and the General bethought himself of turning them into allies. He therefore summoned Jiand Khan, Halil Khan, Shah Sawar, and Muhammad Hassan to a Durbar, and used all the arguments that he thought would appeal to their minds. Where, he asked them, were those victorious Germans on whom they depended? As for the Germans becoming Mussulmans, he would give them a lakh of rupees for every German they could produce who had become a follower of the Prophet. The truth was that the Turks had become Germans, "taking their orders from their new masters, drinking wine and doing other things contrary to the Koran." Let them look rather to the Sherif of Mecca, their spiritual head, who was on the British side. Could they not see that all their interest lay in the friendship of the Sirkar?

These and other such arguments seemed to prevail upon the chiefs, who not only professed their sorrow for their past misdeeds, but offered to help the General Sahib in his campaign against Juma Khan and the Ismailzais. The General might even have thought that he had won them over but for Idu, who was impressed neither by their contrition nor their promises. They were, he said, resentful and vindictive, and would turn against the General as soon as they found opportunity. They already suspected a trick; if they discovered the truth, he might be certain of their hostility.

Thus warned, Dyer made his plans for attacking Juma Khan at Galugan. He put the head of the Rekis in command of Khwash, with a few of that tribe and five out of the nine infantrymen who could

handle a rifle—an inadequate garrison, but all that he could spare. He then set his force in order of march, with his allies as widely apart as possible. Shah Sawar and his men were made advance guards ; Halil Khan and the Gamshadzais were put on the left, and Jiand and his Yarmuhammadzais on the right flank. The infantry went with the baggage, the guns and ammunition brought up the rear, and the cavalry and a few infantrymen formed the General's personal escort.

There was, besides Juma Khan, a possible enemy in the Khan of Bampur, a chief of Persian Baluchistan, whose stronghold was six marches to the south of Khwash. To him Dyer sent Idu's two spies, who arrived at Bampur in their guise of fugitives with such tales of the power and intentions of an approaching British army that the terrified chief fled in the middle of the night and never halted until he threw himself at the feet of the British Political Officer at Makran on the shores of the Persian Gulf.

The General himself with his column made a forced march of five days on short rations to Galugan, to find that Juma Khan had taken refuge in the high hills which surrounded the place. The General therefore sent him the same message as he had sent Jiand Khan at Kamalabad, and with the same result. Juma Khan, to save his crops, came in and made submission. The General liked the looks of Juma—a man of "very pleasing, well-cut, high-bred face, always full of smiles and laughter, as though life were one huge joke"—and Idu was this time entirely satisfied. "If," he said, "Juma Khan gives you his oath on the Koran, he will keep it."

There was besides the consideration that the best route from Southern Persia into Afghanistan lay through Galugan. With Juma Khan sworn to the British side, General Dyer felt that the best part of his work was done.

Our conquistador, however, was still in a position of some difficulty and danger. He had by that time a considerable column, for in the march he had been joined by various contingents of tribesmen; he had all the chiefs of the Sarhad as his prisoners on parole, and his own force was greatly outnumbered by their retainers; food supplies were very short, and he was eighty miles distant from his base, the little British fort of Kacha. The weather had become very hot, and the water had grown very short. Moreover, the chiefs, as Idu and the Sarhad-dar discovered, were apprehensive of being led into a trap at Kacha, and a mutiny was nightly expected. In these circumstances, General Dyer found his best chance of safety in forced marches and in showing an assured and confident front. By skilful dispositions and wary diplomacy he at last contrived to get his whole force and his prisoners safely within the walls of the fort. There were ample supplies of food. "For the moment," says General Dyer, "all need for anxiety seemed at an end." Taking into account the instructions he had received, as well as the smallness of his force, he came to the conclusion that his only course was to gain and maintain the friendship of the Raiders. Accordingly, on the 2nd of May, he held a Durbar, and after warning the chiefs again of the folly of putting any trust in the Germans, the General called on them

to sign an agreement by which they handed over their country, pledged themselves to loyalty, and promised to give timely warning of the approach of German agents. The chiefs put their thumb-marks to an imposing document drafted by the Sarhad-dar, and took their oath on the Koran. They were then given large presents of money, and were told that they were free to return to their homes.

As General Dyer sat down to write his report to Simla, he may have felt a certain justifiable complacency. With a handful of men, by a rare combination of bluff, audacity, and skill, he had conquered and, as he thought, pacified three warlike and formidable tribes. He had besides secured a treaty which, if Simla cared to go further, might settle the whole question of the Sarhad. Persia, as he knew, had just been raided by the Yarmuhammadzais, who had carried away hundreds of Persian ladies and children; it was, therefore, probable that that country would welcome the transfer of such a nest of brigands to a power which could control them. In any event there was the treaty, signed, sealed, and delivered. There was besides the pledged word of the chiefs to break with the enemy and mend their broken friendship with the British Raj. He had fulfilled his orders; he had re-established the position. He had shown a kindness, a trust, a confidence, which would no doubt be justified. . . .

In the midst of his reflections Idu, who had been absent on leave during these amicable negotiations, burst into his room, and with the candour of a friend shattered his complacent dreams. The General

Sahib, he said, had done wrong to disregard his warnings against Jiand Khan and Halil Khan. Idu's own men had discovered that hardly had Jiand got out of Kacha when he halted, called a meeting of the Raider chiefs, urged them to repudiate their oaths, collect their fighting men with all possible speed, attack and take Khwash, and then turn upon the General's force, which, as they had seen, was contemptibly small.

All had agreed save Juma Khan, who said that the British General had treated them well, had spared their lives and their crops, and had given them gifts. He, Juma Khan, had never broken his word, nor would he begin then ; and so saying, with his followers behind him, he had left the Durbar, and ridden off to his own country.

CHAPTER X.

JIAND KHAN.

A RACE FOR KHWASH—THE DIPLOMACY OF IDU—AN IMPROVISED
ARMOURED CAR—A TERRIBLE MARCH—DIPLOMATIC SURREN-
DERS—A GAME OF CHESS—A VICTORY OF PERSONALITY.

THE work was to be done all over again. The General calculated that Jiand Khan would take some little time to collect his scattered forces. "The one thing left for us to do," therefore, "was to set off on the morrow, march back to Khwash, reach it before Jiand, and organise our defence against his coming." With this decision Landon and the Sarhad-dar agreed.

Then it occurred to General Dyer that the motor-car might be useful in such a race, a proposal which Idu hailed with enthusiasm. Jiand's men, he said, would take it for a new sort of devil; it would be more useful than a dozen guns. It was arranged accordingly that Landon should lead the army by the direct road over the hills to Khwash, and endeavour to reach the place in seven days. The General and Idu, taking a more circuitous route, were to get in ahead and warn and hearten the garrison.

Allan, who had been at Robat all this time with

the car, met them by rendezvous nine miles out of Kacha, and everything went prosperously until upon the second day Idu, who began to think that the car could do anything, persuaded the General to make a short cut. They entered the hills by a gorge, which rose steeply to the summit, and when over the crest they found the ravine narrow so much that they could go no farther, nor could they so much as turn to go back. They contrived, however, to dig a way through the wall of the ravine out to the open hillside, and then by a long hairpin loop, over the rough broken surface and blind gorges of the hillsides, with endless and arduous pushing and digging, got by nightfall to the rendezvous they had made with Landon.

Parting again in the morning, army and motor-car followed their separate ways, both pressing forward to reach Khwash before Jiand Khan. The going was bad and grew rather worse than better, over sandy wastes and hills under the fierce glare of the sun. One night they came upon a camp of Idu's people, and were hospitably entertained to mutton spitted on the cleaning rods of rifles and roasted over the camp-fires. On the borders of Jiand's territory they fell in with fifteen well-armed Rekis on camels, who told them that Jiand Khan was advancing on Khwash with a big *lashkar*,¹ and was probably already there. Idu persuaded his tribesmen to join them, and they all pressed forward in the race against Jiand. The General understood well how much depended on getting in first; "the holder of Khwash was master of the Sarhad."

¹ *I.e.*, armed force.

A score or so of miles farther on Idu's keen eyes descried an encampment in a nullah ahead. It was a band of eighteen Yarmuhammadzais under Izzat, a Raider who had recently returned with many captives from a successful foray into Persia, and had been sent out by Jiand Khan to reconnoitre. Then Idu showed his powers as a diplomatist. After concealing his party in a ravine and wriggling out to reconnoitre, he opened up negotiations with Izzat, and gave him a highly coloured account of the powers and resources of the General and his army. Then, after leading Izzat to a spot from which he could see the motor-car, "Do you see," he said, "that queer thing there? The front, as you perceive, is filled with hundreds of little holes. The General Sahib has only to press a button and a hail of bullets will come out of them, so that you and all your men will certainly be slain. I have come to try to save your lives; if I return and tell him you are going to fight, you are all dead men."¹

By these and other no less ingenious arguments he so worked upon the mind of Izzat that the chief and his men made abject surrender to the General, and even offered to join with him against their own tribe. Izzat, moreover, let out that Jiand Khan had been very speedy in his mobilisation, was already on the march in full force, and would reach Khwash on the following day.

The sun was setting, but the General determined

¹ Colonel Claridge afterwards contrived to mount a machine-gun on a block of wood over the back-seat of this fighting Overland. The General thereupon had a course lined with dummy men, called the chiefs to a Durbar, and showed them how the car going at full speed could riddle the targets with bullets. Thus the veracity of Idu was demonstrated.

to push on by night through the hills which lay between him and their goal. It was a terrible march over a whole series of trackless nullah-intersected hills, with steep-sided valleys, sand drifts, and marshy tracts to be crossed in the darkness by the aid of the stars and the car lamps. By the use of a stout rope which foresight had provided, Izzat's men and the Rekis dragged the car over and through those hills and nullahs until at last they came to an up-ended strata of shale and quartz, in which the shale being weathered away, the quartz stood out in great dagger-like points which ripped tyres and tubes to ribbons. Allan kept putting on new tubes and tyres, muttering the while that he was of the bull-dog breed and was not to be beaten, and in the sweltering heat they pressed on, often dragging the car along on its rims, until at last, when dawn was breaking, the chauffeur nodded over his wheel, and the car plunged over the edge of the track into a sandy nullah-bed. A few minutes later the sun rose over the plain below, lighting up the walls of Khwash, a bare five miles away.

They left the car where it lay, and pressed along over the plain on camels, the General making Izzat ride beside him to prevent treachery. His relief was unspeakable when at last he perceived a sentry—one of his five infantrymen—standing on one of the towers of Khwash. The General waved his helmet; the man rushed out, in no less joy than Dyer, and told them to hasten inside as Shah Sawar was encamped near-by with a large force and might attack at any moment.

Once in the fort, the General occupied the high tourelle with those whom he counted faithful, and

placed Izzat's band in the square, save only Izzat himself, whom he kept close by his side. Then Idu set out upon a fresh career of diplomacy with the object of gaining over Shah Sawar before Jiand Khan should arrive, and so far succeeded that the chief came in, made submission, and was held hostage with Izzat. Jiand himself, with a large force, being expected that evening, the General sent a messenger on a swift camel with a letter to Major Landon, asking him to push his cavalry ahead and press forward with all speed in this race against the enemy.

Jiand Khan arrived at nightfall, and encamped near-by. If he attacked at once they could not hope to save the fort, so Idu undertook another mission. He told Jiand that the General was in Khwash with his whole army and many devil-possessed motor-cars; that Izzat and Shah Sawar, having seen the folly of resistance, had already submitted; and that as the General was greatly enraged by his treachery, Jiand's only chance was to make submission. The old chief was partly shaken by these stories, which he did not know whether to believe or disbelieve; remaining irresolute through that critical night, he lost the golden moment which would have given him victory. In the morning the little garrison, which had not slept, looked anxiously out over the plain, and at last perceived a camel-rider racing towards the fort. It was the Sarhad-dar, who flung his arms round the General, whom he had not expected to see alive. At the risk of his life he had ridden ahead of the army.¹

¹ Khan Bahadur Shukker Khan, Sarhad-dar and Political Attaché, was evidently a fine fellow. Landon describes him as "full of energy and character . . . his advice was always 'attack.'"—F.S.R., vol. ii. chap. xi.

Then the dust of the approaching cavalry could be seen on the edge of the plain, the infantry, guns, and camels followed close behind. When they were all inside the fort, the General breathed freely again. Khwash was safe.

There was nothing then for Jiand Khan but to make submission, and this he did, blandly assuring the General that he had merely come to Khwash to pay a ceremonial visit. Shah Sawar, whose letters to the Germans had just been intercepted by Landon's spies, was no less profuse in his assurances of unswerving loyalty. Halil Khan, who came along a little later ahead of his *lashkar*, when he found how things stood, also made submission. At another Durbar General Dyer accepted fresh assurances—in the spirit in which they were given. When the General proposed that the Sarhadis should form a corps of levies, the chiefs to be officers and the pay to be good, they all pretended to agree; but Halil Khan begged to be permitted to depart for family reasons. The General gave him leave to go, but before he went, looking him in the eyes, said, "Halil Khan, if you play me false, or ever raise your hand against me again, I will blow off your head." Then Halil Khan, drawing the Koran from under his robe, swore upon it that he would never again fight the General Sahib, and so left.

Jiand Khan, who was called upon to restore all the booty he had raided, presently yielded up the Government camels he had seized on the British lines of communication, much miscellaneous loot, including the General's own baggage and four tyres which Allan found welcome, as well as four hundred

Afghan camels seized on the caravan route from Nushki to Robat.

Then General Dyer set to work to make good the defences of Khwash. He obtained gun-cotton and barbed wire from Kacha, blew up the surrounding walls and three of the towers, and replaced them by a scientifically entrenched camp, well hidden by the folds of the ground and commanded by the high tourelle, which he improved, strengthened, and armed with a machine-gun. Outside the walls he made a garden, which he filled with all manner of vegetables, and fields which he sowed with quick-ripening barley. By the end of May the heat was intense; despite his exertions there was an insufficiency of fodder for the camels and horses, which began to die off in alarming numbers. The garrison had by then been increased by a whole squadron of the 28th Light Cavalry under Colonel Claridge and two machine-guns from Nasaratabad, and the General saw that he would be starved out of his position. Accordingly he sent to Jiand Khan for some of the *bhusa*, or straw, which that chief had in abundance at Kamalabad; but although he offered four times the market price, Jiand Khan refused to let him have any. Then the General bethought himself of an old chief, Murad, who occupied another fertile valley, Karsimabad. This old man, who had been ousted from the leadership of the Sarhad by Jiand, was no friend of the dispossessor, and told the General that he could have all the *bhusa* he wanted, and for nothing, at the same time warning him of the renewed plots and evil intentions of Jiand and Halil Khan

The General had by that time intercepted further letters from Shah Sawar to the Germans, imploring their aid and informing them of the small strength of the British forces, which helped to convince him that these warnings were well founded. He must watch and wait for Jiand Khan ; but in the meantime he had sufficient evidence against Shah Sawar. He tried that chief by drumhead court-martial and sentenced him to death ; but Shah Sawar's wife, falling on her knees before the General, prevailed upon him to spare his life, the lady undertaking that he would never play false again. She was a woman of character and of beauty, the Gul-Bibi, and Shah Sawar was her abject slave. " I swear to you," she said to the General, " that if ever my fool of a husband raises his hand against you again or breaks his word to you, I will shoot him with my own hands. I, the Gul-Bibi, swear it."

Next day a message came from Karsimabad that fourteen great stacks of *bhusa* were ready for transport, and the General determined to go himself with the camels and a small escort that he might thank and pay his friend Murad. By that time Major Landon had left to return to his duties as Intelligence Officer in Persia, and had been succeeded as Brigade-Major by Major Sanders of the 36th Sikhs. Landon's Intelligence men, however, were still at work, and one of them brought in the news that Jiand Khan had heard of the proposed visit to Karsimabad, and was laying his plans to attack and capture the General.

So began a very pretty game of chess between these two men. Dyer set out, not with a small escort

as he had intended, but with the guns and all the force he could spare from the garrison. When he had marched a little way he heard that the fourteen stacks had been burnt. As they were all apart and had been fired separately there was no question of accident. Murad besides had proof that the thing had been done by Jiand's men.

Dyer pushed on, and within five miles of Karsimabad found Jiand Khan's men ahead and in strong force. Jiand had expected a small escort; but when he saw the General in strength with artillery, he found himself foiled, and sent a messenger to ask the General's leave to come in and pay his respects. Presently the chief himself came ambling along on his camel, and blandly protested his innocence when charged with burning the *bhusa*. Dyer replied to him shortly that he was on his way to Karsimabad to inquire into the matter, and that Jiand Khan must go ahead and make his case there.

When the column got within three-quarters of a mile of the place, the General formed a camp and rode on with an escort of about a dozen infantrymen and fifteen of the cavalry. At the entrance of Karsimabad stood a great tree with a mud platform over its roots, and there in that wide circle of shade the General held his court, with Major Sanders on one side of him and the Sarhad-dar on the other.

Murad began by confirming the report that the *bhusa* had been burnt, and when the General asked him if he knew who had done it, he replied that he had caught the culprit, and produced a Yarmuhammadzai.

Then as Murad was bringing the man forward

there appeared from every quarter armed men, as if they had sprung out of the ground, Yarmuhammadzais who had lain concealed in the adjoining fields, and who now came forward, close on two hundred of them, and squatted in a circle close round with their magazine rifles across their knees, Jiand Khan and his kinsman, Nur-Muhammad, well in the foreground.

Then Dyer saw that he had made what he calls a "tactical error" in leaving his force three-quarters of a mile away. His twelve infantrymen were formed on his right, but his cavalymen were dismounted behind the tree, and stood with their lances in their hands; their rifles remained in the buckets on the off-sides of their horses.

General Dyer had fallen into a trap. He knew it—"we all knew it, though not one man with me showed it by the quiver of an eyelid." Proceeding with the inquiry, he demanded of Murad's prisoner why and under whose orders he had burnt the *bhusa*.

Then Nur-Muhammad sprang up and shouted defiance, "The country being theirs and everything in it, they could burn the *bhusa* or anything else."

What followed happened quickly. The General told Nur-Muhammad to sit down; Nur-Muhammad replied with a sneer and a threat; the General ordered his arrest. As a sepoy stepped forward the Yarmuhammadzais as one man sprang to their feet and brought their rifles to the present. The General, in a fury, calling them dogs and ordering them to sit down, reached out a hand, caught hold of Jiand Khan, and forced him down by his side.

There was a struggle of the spirit behind the show

of force. The Yarmuhammadzais looked to their chief ; Jiand Khan, no longer young, had lost his nerve, and sat cowering. Hesitation and doubt spread among the threatening crowd, and most of them sat down. On a swift order from Dyer, Major Sanders and the escort sprung forward and disarmed the men who remained standing. Then the General ordered those who had sat down to pile their rifles against a neighbouring wall. Like sheep they obeyed, and all was over.

Then the General told the Yarmuhammadzais that he had spared them over and over again, but that his patience was exhausted. He gave his escort orders to seize them, bind them, and drive them back to the camp. Upon this some of the tribesmen leaped up and escaped among the high-grown crops ; but the escort seized sixty of them, bound them in threes with their own turbans, and marched them off to the camp.

CHAPTER XI.

MARCH AND COUNTER-MARCH.

A DARING ESCAPE—THE RESCUE OF JIAND KHAN—A CLEVER
RUSE—A VALLEY AMBUSH—THE FATE OF HALIL KHAN.

GENERAL DYER addressed Quetta for orders on the disposal of his prisoners, and set about the liberation of those unfortunate Persians who had been captured by the Raiders, and were held in a state of slavery. By proclamations and the offer to purchase all slaves on scheduled terms he collected a great number of women and children, some recently captured, others who had been slaves for years, but all in a wretched state of starvation and nakedness. These unfortunates he clothed in white army drill and brightly coloured prints requisitioned from Kacha, and when he had restored the weaklings to health by rest and feeding, organised a caravan and sent them back to their homes in the Narmashir. As a measure of poetic justice he made Izzat the slave-raider convoy the caravan, and, so that there might be no deception, ordered him to bring back letters announcing their safe arrival.

Then, by arrangement, he sent off his prisoners to Saindak, where they were to be met by a strong

force of the 106th Hazara Pioneers, to be taken on to Quetta. He had, after careful combing out, forty-seven prisoners, including Jiand, his son, and some of the most dangerous chiefs of the Sarhad, and as the nine days' march between Khwash and Saindak was through rough roadless country overrun by the enemy, he sent the strongest escort he could spare, three troops of cavalry, seventy-five infantry, and two maxims, under command of two British officers—three-quarters of his entire force.

They started off one morning in July 1916, and pitched their camp that evening on an open hillside, where a rough zareba was made with barbed wire, and the prisoners, all but Jiand and his son, placed inside with sentries over them. In the middle of the night the sentries, hearing stealthy sounds from the enclosure, fired into the darkness. The whole camp was aroused, lamps were brought, the officers rushed to the zareba, and to their horror found it empty. The prisoners had flung their clothes over the barbed wire, had then borne down upon it and broken it with their weight, and so escaped naked into the hills. At two o'clock the next morning a weary Sawar rode into Khwash and gave the General the disastrous news.

The full extent of this misfortune was borne in upon Dyer. His slender forces rested on the prestige of his success, and here was failure. Not only would he have to face the sarcasms of his Government, which on his representations had sent 300 Hazaras to Saindak, but a wireless troop which was coming to Khwash under a small escort was likely to be in danger, and it was probable, too, that Halil Khan

and his Gamshadzais would join with the escaped prisoners in an attempt to rescue Jiand Khan.

The General made his plans on the instant. Sending instructions ahead for a rendezvous, he set out with Major Sanders, Idu and the Sarhad-dar, and the very few men he could then spare from the garrison, came up with the prisoners' escort in the evening, rearranged the forces, took twenty-five cavalry, fifty of the infantry and two machine-guns, and ordered the officer commanding the escort to proceed with all speed to intercept the wireless troop, take them along with him to Saindak, and there hand over Jiand Khan and his son to the Hazaras. The General himself, with his fighting force, made a night march of twelve miles on Kamalabad in order to intercept Halil Khan, who, he was by that time certain, would attempt a rescue.

In this manœuvre the General so far succeeded that Halil Khan, who had actually been in Kamalabad, retreated before him into the hills, and the General was comforting himself with the thought that at least Jiand Khan, who was after all the supreme chief, and his son would be handed over at Saindak, when another breathless messenger arrived from the officer commanding the escort. Jiand Khan and his son had been snatched out of his hands.

What had happened was shortly this: nineteen of the Yarmuhammadzais who had escaped ran all the way, naked as they were, to Kamalabad, there clothed and armed themselves, went back to the rescue of their chief, attacked the weakened escort, and after a long and hard fight, in which many on

the British side were killed and the two British officers wounded, went off carrying Jiand Khan and his son and many rifles and much ammunition with them. What remained of the escort would certainly have been massacred but for the opportune arrival of the wireless troop and its escort, which were thought to be the advance guard of reinforcements.¹

General Dyer, sparing in the midst of disaster a point of admiration for the rescuers, fell back at once upon Khwash, sent Colonel Claridge out with all the men he could spare (a small detachment of cavalry and infantry) to bring in the wireless troop and the remnants of the prisoners' escort, and despatched a camel messenger to the officer commanding the Hazaras asking him to join if possible with Colonel Claridge, and in any case to bring his force to Khwash.

In the meantime Jiand Khan, with a large force, took up his station three miles to the north-east, and Shah Sawar, whose life had been spared, worried the garrison from the hills to the south-west. It was plain that they intended an attack, and one night it came. The General, who manned the outer defences during the day to give an impression of strength, withdrew his garrison every night into a small fortified sector, and had his two maxims trained on the empty camp, one from this sector, and the other from the sole remaining tower. When, therefore, the enemy attacked, they swarmed into

¹ The column had entered a defile in the hills, where the cavalry, which had been furnishing the flanking parties in the plain, could no longer operate. The infantry, being dead-beat, neglected to throw out adequate flanking parties : hence the disaster.

the empty camp, expecting to find the garrison, and were met instead by a heavy rifle and maxim fire from the tourelle and the sector. In the darkness they contrived to withdraw, with (as was afterwards reported) their dead and wounded, and never repeated the attempt.

While the garrison was thus defending itself, Colonel Claridge pushed on swiftly yet warily, overtook the escort, joined up with the officer commanding the Hazaras, and took command of the column escorting the wireless troop. Some days later he brought his column safely into Khwash, and with them Major Lang in command of three hundred men of the 106th Hazara Pioneers. With this magnificent reinforcement General Dyer felt himself again in a position to take the field. Jiand Khan, on his side, realising that there was no longer hope of taking Khwash, withdrew beyond Kamalabad into the Sar-i-drokan valley on the farther side of the Morpeish Hills. On the 28th July, two days after the reinforcements arrived, the General set out with the three hundred Hazaras, a squadron of cavalry, two mountain and two machine-guns, and some Rekis. His British officers were Major Sanders (his Brigade-Major), Major Lang, Captain Moore-Lane, Lieutenant Bream of the Hazaras, Lieutenant English with the guns, and Captain Brownlow in command of the cavalry. Colonel Claridge was left in command at Khwash with the remnant of the original force and two machine-guns. That officer's careful dispositions prevented any attack on the weak garrison; he was besides successful in discovering the man who had been giving the Raiders

their information, and by making him prisoner balked their plans.

The valley in which Jiand had placed his flocks and herds was, as General Dyer found, a very strong position. Its whole length, some seventy-five miles, was guarded by the precipitous Morpeish Hills on the one side and the Sar-i-drokan range on the other. The north-western end of the valley could only be entered by a precipitous and narrow gorge called the Dast-Kird, easy to defend and difficult to attack ; and the south-eastern end, at a place called Gusht, was impassable, save by a gorge almost as difficult as the other. There were only these two ways of entering the valley, and to attempt either involved a predicament. For, as the sagacious Idu pointed out, if the column forced its way through Dast-Kird, Halil Khan could send his herds out by Gusht, whereas if it tried to enter by Gusht, not only could Halil Khan escape by Dast-Kird, but his way would be open to Khwash, and, moreover, as Gusht lay on the border of the Gamshadzai country, the General, in attacking the defile, would probably have to reckon on Halil Khan as well as the Yarmuhammadzais. There was, besides, at Gusht an independent chief ready to attack the side which he thought would be defeated.

General Dyer made his camp at Kamalabad, with the Morpeish Hills between him and the Sar-i-drokan valley. From those hills, as he knew, he was being watched by hundreds of eyes, a circumstance which suggested to him a way to defeat the enemy. A little before nightfall he ordered Captain Brownlow to advance several miles in the direction of Dast-

Kird, making as big a show as possible, and to return quietly and quickly to Kamalabad under the cover of darkness. This Captain Brownlow did, and, the better to deceive the enemy, at the farthest point reached he collected brushwood and made fires, so as to give Halil Khan the impression that General Dyer's whole force was camping there on its way to the Dast-Kird.

Jiand Khan fell into the trap. Sending his herds to what he thought was safety in the direction of Gusht, he marched with his fighting men all night in the direction of Dast-Kird. In the meanwhile, the cavalry having rejoined the main force, General Dyer set out for Gusht.

"I think," says Major Yeates, "one of General Dyer's most noticeable characteristics was his friendliness and accessibility to every one in his force. He was always ready to listen to any one's suggestions, whether he was a commanding officer or lousy Baluchi tribesman. I remember when he was contemplating forcing the defile beyond Gusht . . . and committing his force to a march of some forty miles through extremely difficult and almost unknown country, he called up the senior Indian officer of the Hazara Pioneers and discussed it thoroughly with him; the result was that the Hazaras felt it a matter of personal honour that the column should go through. Not," adds Major Yeates, "that he was liable to be unduly swayed by his advisers; once he had made up his mind, no man could be more unshakeable in carrying out his plans. He always seemed to have a complete grip of the situation and be ready for any emergency. If a mes-

senger came to his tent at 3 A.M. with unexpected information, he would issue the necessary orders without hesitation or waste of time . . . he never was at a loss for some expedient.”¹

All soldiers must admire the beauty and simplicity of the particular piece of strategy which evoked this encomium. General Dyer set the two forces, his own and the enemy's, marching in opposite directions. While Jiand Khan was pressing along the fifteen-mile road to Dast-Kird, the British column, was getting well on its way over the much greater distance which separated Kamalabad from Gusht.² By the time Jiand Khan had discovered his mistake, the General (on the other side of the range) had gained two marches.

By that ruse, General Dyer, after marching three days, reached the Gusht defile ahead, but not very far ahead, of Jiand Khan. He would have found it difficult to force the passage had he been opposed, since, says Lieut.-Colonel Landon, “the opening into these precipitous and rocky hills was very narrow, with an isolated pimple crowned by a mud fort in the middle. The spurs rose steeply from the nullah-bed, and were 2000 odd feet above it—stiff climbing on an August day. As it was, he received a cordial welcome from the local chief and made an unopposed passage through the defile. The Yarmuhammadzais, making a desperate effort to recover their lost advantage, arrived that same night at a point only five miles down the valley. They were from one thousand to fifteen hundred strong, and there were

¹ Extract from letter to the author.

² General Dyer reckons it at sixty miles ; Major Yeates at forty.

besides, as the chief of Gusht told the General, Halil Khan with his Gamshadzais, only two marches away to the north.

That night the column encamped by a fine *kareze*, or water-channel, three miles along the valley, and next morning marched three miles farther, in the face of sniping which grew hotter as it advanced, and encamped again in a strong position beside a spring. Halil Khan, as the General knew, intended to join Jiand Khan, which would have given Jiand at least another thousand men, and the General decided to attack the Gamshadzai position if possible before they came together. Next morning at five this attack was begun—up the hillside towards a defile called Saragan; but the defence was so strong and the ground so difficult that by eleven o'clock the main body had advanced only half a mile, and the General, seeing that the attack must fail, withdrew his forces—not without some loss—under a covering fire from the Maxim and mountain guns. In the meantime a body of the enemy, descending from the hills, had attacked the picket-post guarding the spring where the column had camped, and captured the position. The General himself with Brownlow and a dozen cavalymen rode forward to regain this vital point, were met by a heavy fire, but dismounted without loss, attacked and retook the picket-post.

Then Dyer, realising how difficult it was to reach the enemy in the hills, decided to remain in the open and await developments. He had brought food for a month; the enemy, he calculated, had only sufficient for four or five days, and were besides

prodigal with their ammunition at long range. Reckoning also that the disparity in strength would tempt them to attack, he chose the strong position where he had first encamped within the valley, and there resolved to wait. As he made his short retreat into this position the enemy pressed in upon all sides, shouting to him that he was surrounded, and promising to spare his life if he would surrender. They had occupied a little mud fort on a hillock near the gorge and commanding the camping-ground, but were driven out of it by Lieutenant English with his mountain guns.

Under the lee of this hillock, and owing to the convex shape of the neighbouring hills, the encampment could not well be sniped. There were, however, some low hills running out from the sides of the gorge in which an enemy might collect, and from which he might attempt a night assault. From that quarter the General expected the attack, and there accordingly under cover of darkness he placed two strong pickets, each of fifty men, on either side of a little valley which led towards his position.

Now, when Dyer was making these wary dispositions, Halil Khan arrived with reinforcements at Jiand Khan's camp, and harangued the Yarmuhammadzais on their lack of enterprise against a force so much inferior. If Jiand Khan had lost his nerve, let them serve under him, Halil Khan, and he would lead them to victory. To this audacious proposal Jiand Khan, old and very weary, consented.

Halil Khan was so secure of success that he wrote to the Khan of Bampur that the General was already

a captive in his hands, and invited him to come and share the booty. Then, without calling in his own men, either because he wanted to spare them or because he thought the Yarmuhammadzais were enough, he led Jiand Khan's tribe into that long deep hollow between the two low hills where General Dyer had so secretly posted his pickets, and prepared to rush the camp at dawn.

The Yarmuhammadzais moved as silently as cats in the darkness. Neither were they aware of the pickets nor were the pickets aware of them until just before daybreak, when an enemy's rifle going off by accident, the pickets fired down into the hollow, and General Dyer rushed out of his tent, knowing that what he had provided for had come about. Instantly he gave orders that every man in the camp should reinforce the pickets.

Dawn by that time was breaking, and as the shades of night lifted from the valley, Halil Khan and his men were completely exposed to a concentric fire from above. They fought desperately in their hopeless situation ; but by eleven o'clock the fight was over, and such of the enemy as were left alive were fleeing along the valley.

" Halil Khan," says Lieut.-Colonel Landon, " poked his head up over a stone of his sangar, and a bullet hit the stone, mushroomed, and took the top of his head off." The body was found lying in the hollow sixty or seventy feet below. Then one of the Rekis who had been at the Durbar in Khwash remembered Dyer's last words to Halil Khan, and the story went round that the General Sahib had done unto Halil Khan even as he had said

That afternoon a native officer of the Hazaras entered the General's tent and asked for the body of Halil Khan. The Yarmuhammadzais, he said, after the action below the Saragan defile, had dug up and hideously mutilated the bodies of the Hazara dead. It was fitting, therefore, that they should do the same by the body of Halil Khan.

Dyer, although he had not fired a shot that day, asked the Hazara who had killed Halil Khan, and the native officer replied that the Sahib had certainly killed him. "Then," said Dyer, "to whom does the body belong—to you or to me?" And the Hazara replied, "To you, Sahib."

General Dyer commanded the Hazara to go at once to Gusht and buy a new winding-sheet, and call in all the mullahs and give Halil Khan a soldier's burial.

CHAPTER XII.

JULLUNDUR.

SPOILS OF WAR—A FLOODED CAMP—A BLOODLESS VICTORY—
 "NEAR THE END OF MY TETHER"—A MYTHICAL FORTRESS—
 A NARROW ESCAPE—A MUTINY QUELLED.

ACCORDING to the ancient tradition of the Sarhad, there is no victory unless the enemy's sheep and goats are taken, and the column made three terrible marches in the direction of Dast-Kird before they found water and these spoils of war. Then, passing through the gorge of Dast-Kird, they returned to Khwash, and there rested for two days. But as the Gamshadzais had been kept out of the battle by Halil Khan and remained undefeated, General Dyer set out once more for Gusht at the head of his force, with the addition of a few Chagai levies under Major Hutchinson.

After marching two days across the sunburnt plain in a dazzle of heat, the column arrived in a small valley closely surrounded by hills, and in the bottom, where there were a small water-hole and a few stunted trees, the camp was made, and the men threw themselves down to rest. The General himself dropped under one of the bushes,

and slept well into the afternoon; then, having seen two flashes of lightning in the distance, and surmising the approach of rain, he gave orders that the camp be struck and repitched higher up the hill. His weary men, seeing no rhyme or reason in the change, grumbled bitterly, and an officer reported their complaints and their fatigue. When the General told him that the dry valley bed would soon be turned upside down the officer stared, first at his commander and then at the sky, and observed that it had never been known to rain in the Sarhad in August. Dyer insisted, and the men sulkily obeyed.

The General noticed that Major Hutchinson's tent was still pitched in the bottom of the valley, and when he found the Major dozing inside roused him up, and told him to move up the hill as it was going to rain. Major Hutchinson murmured sleepily that it never rained in August in Baluchistan, and as the few light clouds which flecked the sky had by that time disappeared, his protest seemed to be reasonable. Nevertheless the General insisted, and all save a few Chagai levies, who remained unnoticed in the scrub, were moved out of the shady comfort of the bottom on to the steep hillside.

Then suddenly, with a mighty roar, a flood swept down the valley, filling it from side to side. The levies and the Sarhad-dar, who had remained below, climbed out of the deluge into the branches of the stunted trees, and were rescued with difficulty and without their kit.¹ In the morning the

¹ The Sarhad-dar was saved by a Reki, who mounted a horse, forced it into the flood, and so reached the tree to which he was hanging.

General was awakened by the Hazaras, who crowded round his tent, thanked him for saving their lives, and hailed him as a prophet. And as trees were hurtled down in the flood roots upwards, it was remembered with awe that the General had used the phrase—"The valley will be turned upside down."

Proceeding, the column went by way of Gusht to Zaiti, beyond the Saragan defile, an arduous uphill clamber which, although unopposed, took from 5 A.M. until midnight. The Gamshadzais occupied two forts of some strength at Jalk, and while still eleven miles from that place General Dyer received a message asking for terms, and proposing withdrawal on either side. Always anxious to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, the General agreed, and asked only the bare necessary safeguards for the peace of the Sarhad. When the hotheads refused to accept his terms, the General withdrew eleven miles to Sinickan, which the Gamshadzais took as a sign that no immediate attack was intended ; but the General formed two camps—one for his transport and a sufficient guard, and the other for a striking force, which was quietly roused at midnight and marched off without any one knowing what was in the wind. Before dawn this column was outside the town of Jalk ; and as the cavalry charged into the place, the enemy, completely taken by surprise, rushed out at the other side, leaving many of their rifles and their women and children behind them.

Thus without further bloodshed peace was restored to the Sarhad. General Dyer, as the narrative shows, had always been anxious to come to terms without

fighting. As the Sarhadis, all save the Rekis and Juma Khan, had rejected his offers, he had fought them of necessity. "No race, white or coloured," as he observes, "ever held in respect man or Government showing weakness or indecision, and it was little use attempting to make friends with these tribesmen without first inspiring them with a wholesome respect for British arms."

The work being done, and done thoroughly, General Dyer, after receiving the submission of the two tribes, applied for leave, and bade farewell to Khwash. "I had had," he says, "eight months of continual work in the hot weather of the Sarhad, and was very near the end of my tether. As a fact, I was by that time suffering badly in health in many ways, and our medical officer insisted upon an immediate return to India for a long rest."¹

The return journey across the almost waterless deserts of Baluchistan is graphically described by Major Yeates,² who had also been invalided to India, and was given a seat in the General's motor-car. That already overworked Overland had to be driven by Allan along camel-tracks from well to well for four hundred miles. The going was possible when the track was clear, but at one point twenty miles from the nearest water "we ran into a series of heavy sand-drifts, which had recently been blown up from nowhere, as is their mysterious way." The General and Yeates, weak as they were, had to put their shoulders to the back of the

¹ 'The Raiders of the Sarhad,' p. 219. "A diet of sand and salt water must in the end affect one."—General Dyer's remark to Lt.-Colonel Landon.

² 'Blackwood's Magazine,' December 1927.

car and push, "the blazing sun beating down on us all the while." Yeates thought it characteristic that when at last after an hour of pushing through sand-drifts without end he counselled retreat, the General gave his proposal "scant consideration." At the end of another hour, when they were both utterly done, "the car settled the matter by breaking its axle-shaft." The imperturbable Allan had brought a spare shaft, which he fitted, and by night-fall they contrived to get back to the water-hole from which they had started in the morning. "I had," says Major Yeates, "an unforgettable demonstration of Dyer's bulldog tenacity once he had undertaken a course of action."

Thus, with ardour and travail to the end, General Dyer returned from his campaign in Eastern Persia.

Mrs Dyer had taken a house at Finningham in Suffolk,¹ and there waited, with a wife's and a mother's anxiety, for news of her husband and sons. Of the former she had heard nothing since the pencilled note from Nushki at the beginning of the year until she received a telegram of the 23rd October 1916 from Simla—

"Arrived Simla after exciting time—Dyer,"

which for the moment set the husband's share of her heart at rest.

Both Army Headquarters and the Government of India recognised and rewarded those signal services. The latter indeed had been somewhat scared by the proffered annexation of a corner of Persia,

¹ Because rents were low in a district much under the enemy's aircraft.

and did not confirm that part of his policy. It was also a little disturbed by a protest received from the Persian Government that General Dyer had built a fortress of unprecedented height and dimensions at Khwash.¹

These doubts and misapprehensions having been set at rest, General Dyer in due course, no doubt at the instance of the Government of India, was made Companion of the Bath. In the meantime, not long after his return, he was given command of the Jullundur Brigade.

Jullundur had for its military area an important tract of the Punjab, including the city and district of Amritsar. It was at that time and later rather a training and recruiting centre than the headquarters of a brigade. Instead of the four regiments which normally go to such a force, it had no less than nine infantry regimental depots, to say nothing of other arms, and was wholly occupied at that time with the recruiting and training of fighting men for the armies in the field.

It was in the course of such routine work that an accident occurred which very nearly brought the life of General Dyer to a premature end.

Dyer's brother, Edward, the brewer, had as a gift allowed him *carte blanche* to buy "the best horse in Bombay Presidency," and he had chosen a fiery chestnut Arab, half-trained and almost unmanage-

¹ The origin of this misunderstanding is explained in chap. ix. of General Dyer's 'Raiders of the Sarhad.' When he was replacing the walls of Khwash by entrenchments, the Raiders, who were watching him keenly, asked him how high he intended to make the new walls. "As I did not think it wise to gratify their curiosity, I replied that, when finished, it might be just possible to see the tops of them!"

able. When this horse, which he called Galahad, gave him no rest in the saddle, he would say, "Well, you scoundrel, have your way," and gallop at a break-neck pace over any sort of country. But to his great grief, Galahad was captured with his baggage by the Raiders on its way to the Sarhad and shot. It was not, therefore, on Galahad but on a casual mount that the accident occurred.

General Dyer, with the other officers commanding brigades, regiments, and batteries of the 1st and 2nd Divisions, had assembled near the Artillery Camp at Nowshera for a demonstration of the result of modern artillery fire on trenches. General Dyer, who was mounted on an artillery horse, rode up when firing had stopped, and set his horse at a trench in his way; but the animal either slipping or balking on the crumbling edge, reared up and fell backwards on his rider. Now General Dyer was, as we have seen, a more than usually powerful man, and, lying on his back, with his open hands he held the shoulders of the horse from coming down upon his face. Thus he probably saved his life; but the full weight of the animal and the high and hard cantles of its artillery saddle came down upon him as far as the chest. When he was carried to hospital and stripped, his lower body was found to be one livid bruise.

He lay in agony a long while in hospital at Abbotabad, holding on to life against the expectations of the doctors, and on the 19th April 1917 found strength to dictate the following letter to his wife:—

“ My horse fell on top of me at Akora and squashed the life out of me, but no bones broken, and I am making a quick recovery. I do hope you are improving and are taking an interest in life as far as the awful state of things will allow you to do. It is possible I will come home shortly ; but it depends on the Chief of the General Staff. I got Ivon’s letter yesterday, and it was very good and thrilling, and am replying to it. Much love. Your affectionate husband.—REX.”

On 4th May he cabled from hospital that he was “ making complete recovery fast,” and had been recommended six months’ leave in England ; but pleurisy developed in the injured lungs, and it was not until the 8th of July that he sailed for England. He reached Finningham in the autumn, the wreck of a man, able only to crawl a few steps with the help of two sticks. But there, in the quiet garden of a Suffolk house, he practised to walk in a natural manner, taking and suffering endless pains. He even tried to fit himself to a saddle ; and although at first he could not open his legs and nearly fainted with the agony of the effort, he at last succeeded. Then he went up for a medical board, in well-concealed agony went through all the testing exercises of the doctors, and bluffed them so successfully that he was passed as medically fit. He was determined, as he said to his wife, “ not to be out of it.”

In mid-winter he set sail for India by way of the Cape on the P. and O. s.s. *Ormonde*. She carried a contingent of Australian unfits, who were at first

disposed to disobey all orders, in particular the rule that uniform must be worn, and to make a rough house of the ship. But General Dyer, by one talk with the ringleaders, brought them all under discipline, and left a happy and well-ordered company at Bombay. By April 1918 he was again in command at Jullundur.

CHAPTER XIII.

FANCY DRESS.

DIVERSIONS AT JULLUNDUR—CAPTAIN IVON DYER—ARMISTICE
REJOICINGS—IMPERSONATION OF JIAND KHAN.

IN the year 1918, occupied as he was with the routine of his command, General Dyer recovered something of his health and strength, although injuries, deep and permanent, remained to torture him with frequent and almost intolerable pain. His command had by that time lost all resemblance to the military unit called a brigade. There were only two whole regiments in Jullundur, the 1st (once Cyclists) Battalion 25th London Regiment, and the 3rd Battalion 23rd Sikh Pioneers; but there were, besides, some thirty or forty depots of all manner of units, a motley and miscellaneous congregation, with hundreds of war-time officers wearily waiting for their release. General Dyer, taking pity on these unfortunates, started a riding school, the Guides and the 11th Lancers providing the horses, with twice-a-week paper-chases and picnics, in which he persuaded the ladies of the station to join. With these and other diversions life went more briskly for Jullundur, and the sickness of hope deferred was in

some degree alleviated. In August the General was cheered by the arrival of his son Ivon. Captain Dyer (to be brief about him) had been shot in the head in France, had recovered his memory and identity in a Dublin hospital, had been transferred to the Indian Army, posted to the 82nd Sikhs, transferred to the 53rd Sikhs, and joined the depot of that regiment at Jullundur. These two together lived a merry life at Flagstaff House.

It happened in the early part of November 1918 that Major-General Sir William Beynon, commanding the Lahore Division, arrived at Jullundur in the course of a tour of inspection. He and his staff officers were the guests of General Dyer, and the diners sat long over their port on the night of the 11th November. At eleven o'clock the telegram General Beynon had arranged for arrived. The armistice had been signed.

"Come along," said General Dyer, "we must wake up the station."

"You may," said General Beynon, "but I am for bed."

Then General Dyer in his army overcoat and General's cap, his son with him, set out in a car and spread the tidings round Jullundur: houses with lights first and houses without lights after, depots which were still awake and depots which had gone to bed, until the whole station knew that the world was again at peace. The General and his son, their good work done, were motoring along the Mall at one o'clock in the morning when they heard a sound as if an empty train were coming towards them over loose metals. They were pres-

ently met by a procession of officers in mess-kit, pyjamas, and mufti, making triumphal music with bagpipes, drums, a post horn, and kerosene tins. They marched in fours, the car leading, to the regimental headquarters of the 36th-2nd Pioneers, which they said had been forgotten, and in the pandemonium ensuing the Dyers escaped to bed. But they were presently awakened by a *réveillé* on bugles, and a great company outside the windows shouting, "We want the General."

They were all brought into the great empty unfurnished drawing-room; the servants roused; every glass, cup, and tooth-mug produced, and such liquor as the house contained; and, as a crowning joy, General Beynon presently appeared, to make, or so it is said, the speech of his life.

More formal festivities followed—a dinner next night at the Club, and later the famous fancy dress ball. The story of General Dyer's share in that occasion cannot be told without certain preliminaries. There is a family, famous in Northern India, of the name of Donald, whose sons were educated, like the Dyers, at Bishop Cotton's school, and rose to eminence in the Indian services by reason of their abilities and their knowledge of the native. Of these Donalds, one, who was head of the police in Jullundur, was a short thick-set man with a great sense of humour and a turn for practical jokes. Once, at a lawn-tennis party some little time before the armistice, General Dyer was greatly affronted by the offensive presence of an unknown guest, obviously a German, and behaving with Teutonic arrogance. At last, when he had almost insulted

him by the grossness of his effrontery, General Dyer lost his temper, and desired to know by what right an enemy subject was at large in his command area. Then the stranger transformed himself, to the mirth of assembled Jullundur. It was Donald.

General Dyer said nothing at the time, but later made it known to Mr Donald that he was expecting a Sheik from the Sarhad, a man of great consequence in his own country, who might arrive at any time. As his expected guest knew only Persian and was a stranger to India, Mr Donald should instruct his police to be on the look-out for him, to treat him with due ceremony, and to conduct him straight to the General.

On the night of the fancy dress ball Mr Donald arrived at the Club in the gown, sandals, cord, and tonsure of a monk. As he entered the Club-house he was met by two of his policemen, who drew him aside, and told him they had some rather serious news. Three wild-looking fellows on camels had arrived in Jullundur city that evening, shouting that they wanted to see the General Sahib. They were suspicious-looking characters, and the times being rather unsettled, a policeman had stopped them to discover their business. As neither seemed to understand the other's language there had been a misunderstanding; the strangers, evidently thinking themselves affronted or arrested, had used high words; the policeman had stood firmly on his duty; and the chief of the cameleers had drawn a tulwar and cut him down. It was feared the poor fellow was dead.

Mr Donald rapidly cross-questioned his informants. What language did the strangers speak?

Persian ! Obviously it was the chief whom General Dyer expected. What a business ! To kill one of his policemen ! Where was the General ?

The General had not yet arrived ; but Captain Dyer, who happened to be near by, wearing the eccentric costume and the mobile moustache of Harry Tate, thought that his father was still at Flagstaff House. Mr Donald must see him at once : the urgency of the affair brooked no delay. Captain Dyer had arrived in the General's car : it was at his service. The agitated Chief of Police jumped into the car, and went with all speed to Flagstaff House, where he was told that the General Sahib had left, it was thought, for the Club. Mr Donald returned in hot haste, rushed into the Club-house, and found himself in the midst of a brilliant assemblage of Kings, Queens, Turks, Chinamen, Pierrots, Columbines, and Harlequins, but no General among them. One of his policemen, however, told him that the strangers had arrived in the compound, and were urgently demanding to see General Dyer.

If Mr Donald would see them himself ? Of course he would see them, and would have something to say to them. The monk went out into the porch, and there, sure enough, were three camels bearing three hooded riders, which stalked slowly and majestically towards him, and halted under a great sheshum tree in front of the porch. Closely attended by Harry Tate, whose moustache grew more and more agitated, Mr Donald stepped out of the porch to meet them. The foremost of the camelry, a very stately old man, turbaned, bearded, ringleted, white-robed and white-trouserred, holding in his two hands a gaily scabbarded tulwar, made a grave

salute. Then Mr Donald, uneasy in a garb unsuitable to such an interview, struggling between indignation and diplomacy, altogether forgot his Persian, and could find nothing to say but "*Tum kya karta hai ?*"

The chief in flowing Persian said he was Jiand Khan, Yarmuhammadzai, and had come all the way from the Sarhad to see his friend, General Dyer Sahib. Mr Donald contrived some sort of reply in Persian; but Jiand Khan, with a gesture of disdain, turned to his attendant and asked him to translate what he had said into Hindustani. The second camel-man, thereupon, in Hindustani of surpassing corruption, informed Mr Donald of the greatness of his chief and the purpose of the mission.

"And tell him," said Jiand Khan, "that I regret the death of one of his policemen; but the fellow was insolent, and so"—flourishing his tulwar—"I cut off his head.

"Tell him also that I will wait here for the General Sahib," added Jiand Khan; and thereupon dismounting, he squatted native fashion under the tree as one prepared to wait until doomsday.

Then Mr Donald, impressed and deferential, ran into the Club for a chair, and saw a great and festive throng crowding round the door, peering through the windows . . .

It took more than one whisky-peg to restore Mr Donald to his natural good-humour, and to extract the admission that the General's Persian was better than his own. As for the second camel-man, it was Allah Dad, General Dyer's servant, who enjoyed a joke as much as his master.

CHAPTER XIV.

AMONG THE RUINS.

A TACTFUL PEACEMAKER—A HAPPY REUNION—DELHI REVISITED
—HISTORICAL MEMORIES — RIOTING — AGRA — RUMOURS OF
TROUBLE.

IN the summer of 1918 there was trouble in Jullundur city between sepoys and citizens, and General Dyer won the gratitude of the city elders by using his personal influence to set matters right. Later in the same year the Muhammadan sepoys of the two police battalions raised at Phillour attacked their Sikh comrades and defied all attempts to restore order. The General arrived in his motor-car at two o'clock in the morning, and by dawn brought the offenders to a proper sense of their iniquities without the use of force.¹ Again, in March 1919, the General was informed by telegram that a draft of sepoys going by train from Lahore to Singapore were defying their officers, and looting the stalls of the sweet-vendors at every railway station. He held up the train at Jullundur, removed the offenders to barracks, restored them to a proper sense of discipline, and sent them on to their destination. Such

¹ A platoon of the 1/25th London Regiment had been sent from Jullundur to occupy the Police Barracks.

incidents, of little consequence in themselves, all go to show the General's tact in the handling of men. His influence with the Indian people was no doubt due in part to his knowledge of their language and their customs, and to a certain turn of humour which they found irresistible. But there was something more—an emanation of magnanimity, of manhood. One of his Indian officers at Jullundur, trying to explain this compelling power, touched his forehead between the eyes. "There is something here in the General Sahib," he said, "which makes us all love him." "I remember," writes an officer who served under him, "General Dyer speaking in their language to an Indian regiment. And I saw a most unusual sight on the faces down the ranks—a look of high appreciation and affection. After thirty years all over India I had rarely seen a native show his true feelings to this extent. And yet his remarks were not all praise; he let them have it on their weak points."¹

In January 1919, his wife and Miss Alice Dyer, his niece, joined the General at Jullundur—a happy reunion after the separations and anxieties of war. Then towards the end of March, with ten days' leave to spend, all three went off together to see the sights of Delhi and Agra. The weather was by that time so hot that they made frequent stops to pour water over the tyres of the General's motor-car for fear of the rubber melting; but there was something more than the burden of heat in the air of those

¹ Letter to the author from Captain D. MacDougall, formerly Indian Army Reserve of Officers, at the time Transport Officer, Jullundur Brigade.

aching plains and dazzling cities—a deep muttering, as of an approaching storm.

*" Ille etiam caecos instare tumultus
Saepe monet, fraudemque et operta tumescere bella "*

The sound, however, was as yet too low to be audible to all but one of those care-free travellers. After a night at Umballa they pushed on to Delhi, and spent the 29th of March among the sights and wonders of Shah Jahan's capital: the great red sandstone fort of the Mogul Emperors; the palace of marble within; and without, the mosques, the bazars, and the walls of the great city.

General Dyer had heard in his childhood how English authority perished and was restored in 1857: he could now read the story in the stones—the cantonments where the 38th and 54th regiments paraded before the Mutiny; the Kashmir Gate before which the main guard shot its officers; the steps of the Fort Gatehouse where Simon Fraser, the Commissioner, was cut down by an African janissary; the gate kept closed for half a century by the British Government, either out of respect for the dead who had fallen there or as a constant reminder of a stern repression; the site of the arsenal magazine blown up by its defenders; those gorgeous royal quarters in the Diwan-i-'Am and the Diwan-i-Khas where the mutineers had bullied their puppet king; the king's kitchen from which the captives were led to be massacred at the tank in front of the Nakkar Khana; and then, outside the city, the ridge where the besieging army lay; the sites of the siege batteries; the Mori Bastion where General

Nicholson stormed the walls, the raised way behind the battlements where he fell in the hour of victory. And there were other sights besides: the Golden Mosque of Roshan-ud-daula, where sat Nadir Shah while his soldiers massacred the people of Delhi; that greatest of mosques, the Jumma Masjid; the Chandni Chouk, which his Persians looted and burned—long since restored and as busy and as turbulent as ever.

They spent that night at Maiden's Hotel, and set out next day for more sightseeing to the south. It was the 30th of March 1919, and as they passed through the streets they came upon a multitude of people shouting and yelling. General Dyer, who sat in front with the chauffeur, called out to the ladies that it must be a festival; but presently, where the crowd was thickest, something altogether unusual happened: two ruffians scrambled on to the back of the car, and were within a few inches of the ladies' heads, when a mounted policeman dashed up, seized the men, and flung them into the road.

The General did not see this incident, but he did not like the look of the crowd. He told his Goanese chauffeur to put on speed, and they soon passed out through the Delhi Gate into a silent region of tombs and of ruins. For eleven miles south along the right bank of the Jumna lie the deserted capitals of fallen Empires, nine Delhis in all, as the reckoning goes, ruin beyond and above ruin—forts and cities, mosques, temples, palaces, and mausoleums, built by conquerors who boasted of Empires universal and everlasting. The General climbed the Kutab

Minar, and saw the vainglorious inscriptions "to the Lord of the Kings of Turkistan, Arabia, Ajana, Sun of the World and the Faith, Elevator of Islam, Dispenser of Safety, Heir of the Kingdoms of Solomon, Abul Muzaffar Altamash Sultan. . . ."

From the top of the Minar, 238 feet high, the General had the bird's-eye view he loved—the river, the plain, and below and towards Delhi, those miles of monuments and tombs. In an East called unchanging, within eight centuries those conquerors had come and gone. Only their boasts and their monuments remained. How had they fallen? Was it because they had forgotten the text of the Koran, inscribed on the tower, "Listen to the word of God and leave merchandising"? Did they come to despise the virtue and valour of the arms which had enthroned them? Did they delude themselves with the idea that their conquests could be maintained by forms of words, or by concessions and surrenders of power?

The iron pillar to Vishnu stands below, symbol of the Hinduism that outlasts the lofty conqueror. And there were many other curious sights to be seen, notably the tomb of the Emperor Humayun, into which Captain Hodson had ridden to disarm their guard and seize the Princes, and on the road near by the spot where Hodson had pistolled his royal captives with his own hands to prevent a rescue—desperate deeds in desperate times.

In the evening they returned to the city, and at the gate British soldiers were on guard. General Dyer being in mufti a sergeant asked him his name, and when the General told him, the sergeant ex-

plained these unusual precautions.¹ There had been rioting at several points, shooting and bloodshed. The crowd had been dispersed, but the troubles were not over. They went on to Maiden's Hotel through silent bazars of closed shops guarded by British pickets.

There had, indeed, been serious trouble that day in Delhi, trouble not on the surface nor of the moment merely, but springing from deep causes and dangerous conspiracies.² The same plot which General Dyer had helped to frustrate in the Sarhad was again working, nearer and more formidably, at the centre of British power to destroy the British Empire in India. And as the greatest darkness is under the lamp, so at the capital sedition found the most complete immunity. The city of Delhi, being the capital of British India, is a separate administration, under its own Commissioner, subject to the Central Government. And the Central Government was at that time divided and infirm of mind, vacillating, pulled several ways, subject to a conflict of influences. The Viceroy desired both to please the Secretary of State and do his duty to India, things not easily compatible. For while the wiser minds of his own Government knew the dangers of giving agitation its head, Mr Montagu was bent upon his policy of indulgence. The Indian politicians, with whom the Secretary of State desired to work, were among the enemies most dangerous to British rule. To allow them to

¹ General Dyer had been fortunate to escape. The Commissioner's car, following him, was upset by the mob.

² For a full and true account of these conspiracies by the man whose sagacity and courage were the chief means under Providence of foiling them, see 'India as I Knew It,' 1885-1925, by Sir Michael O'Dwyer.

conspire and protect India against their conspiracies at one and the same time, was a dilemma over which Lord Chelmsford and his favourite counsellors scratched their heads in vain.

On the one hand, some of the less extreme of the agitators were nominated to the Legislative Council, although they were obviously under the influence of the more violent outside. The National Congress and the Muslim League were allowed to say in Delhi what would have been forbidden elsewhere; Governors prohibited in their provinces the incitements to rebellion freely made in the capital.¹

On the other hand, the Central Government insisted upon the passage of the Rowlatt Bill. This Bill, which had been prepared by a strong Committee, over which Sir Sidney Rowlatt, a judge of the High Court, presided, was intended to take the place of the Defence of India Act, and gave the Executive certain limited powers to deal with crimes of anarchy and revolution. Although it was much less drastic than the Act which it superseded, it was hotly resented (as was natural) by the conspirators against whom it was directed and their friends in the Legislative Council. Although it was the consequence, it was called the cause of their seditious activities.

‘Mahatma’ Gandhi, the catspaw of more resolute

¹ “The All-India Muslim Conference was even more openly rabid in its tone. The speech of Dr Ansari seemed to me such a dangerous incitement to rebellion that, when it came to my notice (Delhi is outside the Punjab, and directly administered by the Government of India), I at once prohibited its circulation in the Province, and I believe other Provinces followed my lead. But meantime it had done much mischief among the fanatical Muhammadans of the towns.”—Sir Michael O’Dwyer, ‘India as I Knew It,’ p. 265.

men, visited Delhi on the 7th March 1919 to open a branch of his Satyagraha Society, a body of men bound by oath to offer resistance to such laws as might be selected by its Committee.¹ The general lines of the conspiracy were to begin with demonstrations of a more or less 'constitutional' order, increasing in severity to a General Railway Strike in May, by which time, it was calculated, the British troops would have been moved to their cantonments in the hills. With the British Army thus demobilised, the time would be ripe and the plains free for a general rising in India and an invasion from Afghanistan.

A conspiracy is like a bomb, which must be delicately timed for effective explosion. It would have suited the arch-conspirators better to have lain quiet until May but for the necessity of rousing the fanaticism of their followers. And fanaticism being a force difficult to regulate, we shall see at every step how the conspirators were foiled by the zeal of their enthusiasts.

There was some dispute on the date of the first demonstration, an all-India *hartal*, or closing of shops. It was fixed for the 30th of March, postponed to the 6th of April, but held in Delhi (which wanted to be foremost) on the original date. It was of this premature demonstration that General Dyer and his ladies were given a glimpse. "Early in the morning of 30th March," says the Hunter Report,² "crowds collected of those who were observing the

¹ See Disorders Inquiry Committee Report (chap. i.), which mildly points out that this was "not the same thing as 'passive resistance.'"

² Chap. i. p. 1.

day as one of fasting and abstinence from work. There is evidence that they objected to people riding in *tongas* (pony-carts) and motor-cars, and showed their objection in certain cases by getting people to alight from vehicles in which they were driving."

This is a pleasant way of putting things; the mob had taken the law into its own hands. It had terrorised the shopkeepers into shutting their shops; it had invaded the railway station and beaten the contractor of the railway refreshment room, "an old deaf man," who obstinately stood to his contract with the railway authorities. There had been fighting round the railway station; the police had been stoned, two or three rioters killed and several wounded. The mob had fallen back through the Queen's Gardens to an open space between the Town Hall and the Chandni Chouk. There a great crowd attacked a small police force of seventeen men, and was pressing it hard, when a British picket of about the same strength came to the rescue. "The picket," according to Mr Jeffrey's¹ statement, "fired off two 'volleys' in the air. This only irritated the crowd, and they charged the British party, who then lowered their rifles and fired into them, causing them to disperse." Eight rioters in all were killed, and an unknown number wounded.

Next day² the *hartal* continued, and there was a great demonstration at the funerals of the rioters. General Dyer and his ladies, finding the shops shut and a sullen city, left Delhi that morning (the 31st

¹ A police officer among those stoned by the crowd.

² The policy of 'little packets,' of a 'minimum of force,' which the authorities were following, while it discouraged the loyal and endangered the police, emboldened the conspirators.

March) and pushed on to Agra. There they marvelled at the beauty of the Taj and the grandeur and desolation of Akbar's deserted capital of Fatehpur Sikri. Then back to Delhi, where they slept the night. A second *hartal* was impending; the air was heavy with suspense, rumour, excitement. A great meeting of Muhammadans and Hindus together was to be held in the Fatehpuri Mosque, a thing unprecedented. *Gandhi was coming to Delhi on the 9th. Would the Government dare to stop him?*

In the early morning the party set out again on the homeward journey to Jullundur. The country through which they went was being stirred out of its pathetic contentment by agents of the conspiracy. The villages were full of alarming rumours. The Rowlatt Act was a frightful measure of tyranny, under which the police could arrest any group of two or three who talked together; there was to be a tax of five rupees on marriages, and another tax of five rupees on funerals; the crops were to be the property of the Government, which could seize all or any part of them. To protect themselves against these unheard-of *zulum*s the people must agitate; they must hold *hartals*. Rowlatt Sahib hukum hai! Who was Rowlatt Sahib? They did not know. Some called him Rowtal; some *Raula*, which means a row. The name, at all events, was ominous; it signified trouble. They must invoke the name of Gandhi. Who was Gandhi? They did not know—*Gandhi, Gandhi gallande ki khubur kaon hai!*¹

¹ "They are talking of Gandhi; goodness knows who he is!" See "Punjab Disturbances" (April 1919), reprinted from the 'Civil and Military Gazette' (Lahore), also evidence before the Disorders Inquiry Committee

If they refrained dreadful things would certainly happen to them ; *hundis* (notes of hand) would be dishonoured ; mortgages foreclosed.

"Hinc usura vorax, avidumque in tempore fœnus
Et concussa fides, et multis utile bellum."

These actuating causes were invisible to the travellers ; but beyond Umballa, where they spent the night, they began to feel the effects. A heavy stone hit the roof of the car as they passed through the turbulent town of Ludhiana, and a large tree with its branches still on it was pushed out suddenly across the road. The chauffeur swerved ; the car passed over the bushy top, nearly capsized, but righted itself and swept on.

On the 6th of April they reached Jullundur.¹ The General was met by Captain Briggs with some rather serious news. The day before, that is to say the 5th April, a code message had been received from Divisional Headquarters at Lahore warning the Brigade that there might be "some trouble" over the Rowlatt Act, and to get into touch with Amritsar.² The message ended, "Special precautions Amritsar."

Captain Briggs accordingly had communicated with the military command at Amritsar, which, he found, was "in close touch with the civil authorities and aware of the possibility of trouble." Later on the same day, on orders from Lahore, he had sent an

¹ Report of Captain F. C. Briggs, D.S.O., The King's Regiment, Brigade-Major, 45th Infantry Brigade. General Dyer's printed statement to the War Office.

² Amritsar was at that time within the Jullundur Brigade area.

Indian officer and twenty sepoy as a guard for Amritsar railway station. There were rumours of trouble also in Jullundur. At the request of the Commissioner they had posted a squadron of cavalry handy to Jullundur city, and had a company of infantry 'standing to' in cantonments.

CHAPTER XV.

AMRITSAR.

CAUSES OF DISCONTENT—SEDITIONOUS MURMURINGS—AN OMINOUS
BREACH OF CASTE—THE BARRING OF GANDHI—AGITATORS
ARRESTED—MOB ATROCITIES.

THERE is evidence that two men in Amritsar were anxiously watching the rising tide of trouble in that populous and turbulent city. One was Mr Miles Irving, the Deputy Commissioner; the other Muhammad Ashraf Khan, the City Inspector of Police.

Being a highly educated civil servant, Mr Irving well understood the material causes of sedition. "The soil" (as he wrote to his Commissioner) "is prepared for discontent by a number of causes. The poor are hit by high prices, the rich by a severe income tax assessment and the Excess Profits Act. Muhammadans are irritated about the fate of Turkey. From one cause or another the people are restless and discontented, and ripe for the revolutionist."¹

Amritsar is a great centre of trade, and her trade had been thrown into confusion: her piece-goods could not be moved from the go-downs, because the

¹ Letter, dated 8th April 1919, to Mr Kitchen, the Commissioner.

railway trucks had been commandeered to carry troops; her speculations in corn were upset by Government purchases on public account and prohibition of export to prevent famine.¹ Even that peaceful folk, the Marwaris, usually engrossed in their ledgers, were taking an unusual interest in politics.

As for Ashraf Khan, he may not have troubled about economics, but he had his ear very close to the ground. His police diary, from the 1st of February 1919 onwards, reports a series of ominously modulated meetings, as if the speakers were at once exciting and holding back the populace they had in hand. The meetings were at first held in the Bande Matram Hall, but as the agitation overflowed, in an open space called the Jallianwala Bagh; the numbers mentioned in the police reports ominously increased—at first 2000 or so, on 6th April “about 50,000 men.” The Government, it was said, was exporting grain to England while the people of Amritsar had to “sleep with stones on their stomachs.” “There were many who for want of clothing have burnt themselves.” In the midst of these misfortunes “black cobras” (the Rowlatt Acts) “were let loose for their protection.” Nevertheless, they must depend on ‘soul force.’ They must look to Mahatma Gandhi and passively resist. “If swords were drawn over their heads, their eyes should not twinkle; chains might be their jewels and the walls of the jails their mosques and temples.”²

¹ The monsoon of 1918 had been the worst for forty-seven years. Wheat was 47 per cent above the ruling price of 1914, European cloth 175 per cent, Indian cloth 100 per cent, ginned cotton 310 per cent, sugar 68 per cent.—Minutes of Evidence, Disorders Inquiry Committee.

² Amritsar Police Diary Reports, printed for official use.

The two principal orators in this style were a Kashmiri Muhammadan barrister with a German degree, Dr Saif-ud-din Kitchlew, and a Hindu assistant surgeon, Satya Pal. These two were prominent in every agitation and spoke at every meeting, and the meetings increased steadily in excitement and in numbers. On 30th March Ashraf Khan reported a great gathering of "between thirty-five and forty thousand people" in the Jallianwala Bagh, to which, as he feared violence, he sent his police in plain clothes. There had been shouts of "*Mahatma Gandhi ki jai!*" "*Hindu aur Mussulman ki jai!*" and Kitchlew had made a speech both threatening and submissive. "It was evident that the people of Amritsar aspired for self-government and Home Rule. . . . It was unnecessary to shed streams of blood in the sacred land; but they should prepare themselves to disobey all orders which might be against their conscience and the commandments of God."¹

Mr Irving had hopes at one time of winning over these ringleaders, but both his warnings and his blandishments were of no effect. On the 4th of April orders were served on certain of them not to speak in public, but they continued to agitate from behind. A Satyagraha Society being founded, its members decided to organise a *hartal* for Sunday, the 6th of April. Now the *hartal* was not only a demonstration against Government, it was illegal;² and the Deputy Commissioner was assured by her

¹ Amritsar Police Diary Reports.

² It had been so decided by the Legal Remembrancer to the Punjab Government.

leading citizens at a meeting on the afternoon of the 5th April that there would be no *hartal* in Amritsar. But while these assurances were being given, Kitchlew and Satya Pal sent a party round the town to announce by beat of drum that the *hartal* was to be held—and held it was, every shop being closed.

Now in the municipal elections which had recently been held, the rival candidates had employed bands of hooligans, organised under gang leaders, to intimidate their opponents. These gangs had never been disbanded, and being apt for mischief, the police watched them anxiously. There was no violence, however, although a notice was posted on the clock-tower by an unknown hand exhorting the people to "die and kill."¹

That day there was a meeting at the Jallianwala Bagh, attended, according to police estimates, by 50,000 people. Shouts were raised for unity, and Hindus and Moslems drank out of the same water vessels—a breach of caste strange, ominous, unprecedented.

Mr Irving, writing to his Commissioner on these events two days after, "regarded the situation with very grave concern." The *hartal* he described as "a triumph of organisation," which proved that "the party of anarchy can, on less than twelve hours' notice, have the whole city at their command in the teeth of the so-called leaders." It was a test: "It will be followed, I venture to prophesy, by further and severer tests, until the Day when, as

¹ Disorders Inquiry Committee, evidence of Mr Miles Irving, Mr Plomer, and Lt.-Col. Smith, I M.S.

the Swami said at the meeting last Wednesday, the people will be ordered to go to jail by thousands."

There follows an even more remarkable passage, which must be quoted in full.

"Who are at the bottom of this I cannot say. The Congress Party are in the outer circle. They passed a resolution against a strike, and promptly came to heel when Kitchlew ordered it. Kitchlew himself I regard as the local agent of very much bigger men. Who these are can only be guessed from their rage at the Rowlatt Acts, which strike at the roots of organised anarchic crime."

The Deputy Commissioner went on to ask for troops. It was absurd, he said, to attempt to hold Amritsar city with a company of British infantry and half a company of Garrison Artillery.¹ "Any resolute action in the city would leave civil lines almost undefended." He pleaded for reinforcements, especially machine, Lewis, and Maxim guns. "As it is we must abandon nine-tenths of the city to a riot, holding only the Kotwali and communications, and even so will be hard pressed to defend the civil lines."

They could not go on indefinitely with the policy of keeping out of the way. ". . . We shall have to stand up for our authority sooner or later. . . . *But for this a really strong force will have to be brought in, and we shall have to try conclusions to the end to see who governs Amritsar.*"

And the letter concluded on a note of foreboding :

¹ The garrison of Amritsar consisted at that time of one company Somerset Light Infantry, half a company of Garrison Artillery, and the 12th Ammunition Column.

"I was wrong in thinking I could influence Kitchlew—he is too deep in. I possibly may get hold of some of the outer circle. But I have not much hope from them. I think that things will be worse before they are better." If the civil magistrate was right Amritsar was in a state of rebellion, and even the civil lines were in danger. Events came swiftly to justify his judgment.

On the 9th of April the Hindu festival of Ram Naumi was held with great uproar in the city. The mob, Hindu and Muhammadan, marched together, shouting "Hindu—Musulman ki jai!" and drinking water out of the same *lotas*. Those who looked on marvelled.¹

Things were coming to a crisis, not in Amritsar only but elsewhere. On the evening of 9th April, 'Mahatma' Gandhi, on his way from Bombay to Delhi, was stopped at a small station, Palwal, in the Punjab. The Punjab Government had issued an order excluding him from the province, and

¹ Evidence of Khwaja Yusuf Shah, Khan Bahadur, of Amritsar, before Disorders Inquiry Committee, Vol. III. :—

Q. On the 9th, on the Ram Naumi day, you observed an extraordinary unity between the Hindus and Muhammedans. Do you call that a manifestation of anti-European feeling?

A. Well, it is not anti-European feeling. To a certain extent it was an extraordinary unity. . . . It was simply to paralyse the Government.

Q. Do you know the penalties attaching to a Hindu for drinking out of the cup of a Muhammedan?

A. Well, I think he will be outcasted.

Q. A Hindu if he drinks out of the cup of a Muhammedan, if he has marriageable daughters, will those daughters be married or not?

A. That I cannot say. Very likely not.

Q. A Hindu who drinks water from out of the cup of a Muhammedan, will the priest perform his funeral and other ceremonies?

A. I cannot say that either.

Q. But it is likely he would not. What is your opinion?

A. That he would not.

the Chief Commissioner at Delhi prevailed upon his vacillating Government at Simla to support the action of Sir Michael O'Dwyer. Gandhi was confined to the Presidency of Bombay.¹ About the same time the Deputy Commissioner received orders from Lahore to apprehend and deport Kitchlew and Satya Pal under the Defence of India rules.

Mr Miles Irving feared trouble if he made the arrest in the city. On the night of 8th April he gathered the heads of his little Government together and discussed the situation. There were present the Officer Commanding the station, Captain Massey ; the Superintendent of Police, Mr Rehill ; the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Mr Plomer ; and the Civil Surgeon, Colonel Smith. They decided that the best way was to "arrest these persons without any fuss." On the following morning Kitchlew and Satya Pal were asked to visit the Deputy Commissioner at his bungalow. They went in two *gharis* from the city, were arrested inside the house, bundled into two motor-cars under a British escort disguised as a shooting party. By eleven o'clock in the morning the prisoners were safely on the road to Dharmsala.²

This stealthy arrest had important consequences : by precipitating events it ruined the careful plans of the conspirators. When the news leaked into the city a great crowd collected in the Chouk Hall Bazar, and by noon came streaming out of three gates towards the civil lines.

¹ If it seem strange that this instigator of sedition was left at large, it may be explained that Gandhi was the 'friend' of the Secretary of State.

² See evidence of Mr Miles Irving, and Captain Massey, Mr Rehill, Mr Plomer, and Lieut.-Colonel Smith, I.M.S.

Beyond the city walls there is an open space—the Aitchison Park,—and beyond this open space the main railway from Lahore to Delhi, and beyond the railway the civil lines. The mob had thus to cross the railway to reach the European quarter.

As to what followed there is the evidence of many witnesses. Mr Miles Irving had expected a demonstration, and possibly "worse." He had provided against an attempt to rescue the deportees, and he was determined not to let the expected crowd "pass the railway lines." He gave written orders to his three European magistrates to keep the crowd back peacefully if possible, but to keep it back "at any cost"—even by military force. Captain Massey arranged that a party of infantry should be route marching past Mr Irving's bungalow about the time that Kitchlew and Satya Pal were expected, and that a reserve of about ninety men, mounted and on foot, should lie in the shade of the Ram Bagh, a garden conveniently behind the civil lines. He had, besides, mounted pickets on the two railway bridges and one level crossing; the other level crossing was guarded by a reserve of about twenty-five police. The party of 54th Sikhs, under their Jemadar, which Captain Briggs had sent from Jullundur, garrisoned the railway station.

About eleven-thirty in the morning Ashraf Khan from the city telephoned to Mr Plomer that crowds were making their way out of the city gates into the Aitchison Park. While he was giving this news to Mr Miles Irving at the Kutchery, Ashraf Khan rang him up again to say that the mobs were led by Ratto and Bugga, Kitchlew's gang leaders, and

that they were on the way to the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow to demand a release.

The crowd which poured out of the three gates is described by Mr Plomer as filling the whole space beyond. Mr Miles Irving, who rode out to support his magistrates, gives a vivid description of it as it surged towards the civil lines: "They were very noisy, a furious crowd; you could hear the roar of them half way up the long road; they were an absolutely mad crowd, spitting with rage and swearing and throwing stones."¹ Mr Irving rode up to the Hall Gate railway bridge, and there found a picket vainly endeavouring to stem the trouble. As they were being stoned, the horses kept backing away from the mob, and Mr Irving was carried with them a hundred yards or so into the civil station. Seeing Captain Massey, he rode off with him to bring up supports. The situation was for the moment desperate. The picket had fallen back to 'Madan's shop,' well within the civil lines. In the nick of time Lieutenant Dickie arrived with a few mounted men. They opened fire, and the crowd fell back.² The bridge was held.

¹ Lala Jiwanlal, Criminal Investigation, Punjab, was in this crowd, and gave evidence before the Disorders Inquiry Committee.

Q. What was the demeanour of the crowd?

A. They were very excited, and just looked like madmen.

Q. Were they uttering any cries?

A. They said, "They have taken away our leaders Satya Pal and Kitchlew." "Where is the Deputy Commissioner? We will butcher him to pieces."

² Mr Miles Irving stated that Mr Beckett, his Assistant Commissioner, gave the orders to fire. Mr Beckett says, "No order was given." Captain Massey says that Lieutenant Dickie brought a reserve party up on his own initiative, and "when he saw the situation he gave orders to fire on the crowd, which undoubtedly stopped them from proceeding up the civil lines." Young British officers have this way of rising to an emergency.

While Mr Irving and Captain Massey were galloping to the Ram Bagh to bring up the reserves, Mr Plomer, with his police reserve of twenty-five men, was hurrying to the railway foot bridge. By the time he arrived a mob of several thousands had crossed that bridge, and got into the railway lines and the road near 'Madan's shop.' They fell back as the police advanced with bayonets fixed and at the ready. Curiously, just at that moment when the crowd was facing the bayonets, "some members of the local Bar," who happened to be there, rushed up and begged Mr Plomer not to fire. "The mob was induced to retire by these gentlemen"; but in the meanwhile another part of the crowd swarmed into the railway goods yard, assaulted the station superintendent, who was saved from death by the Sikhs, and beat Guard Robinson to death with their *lathis*. Still others attacked the telegraph office from two sides, smashed the telephone switch-board, and were dragging the telegraph master out of his bedroom when the Sikh Jemadar with a party of his men rushed in and rescued him. Sergeant Rowlands, an electrician, was less fortunate. He was on his way to duty at the Municipal Power House when he was chased, overtaken, and beaten to death near the Rego Bridge.

Meanwhile Captain Massey had ordered Lieutenant Brown of the Somersets to commandeer every *tum-tum* and *ghari* and rush his men over to the railway station. Mr Brown, like Mr Dickie, took the situation into his own hands, fired on the crowd, and drove it out of the railway. The rebels made one more attempt to get into civil lines by way of

the railway over-bridge, stoned the infantry picket, and would have driven it back but for the timely arrival of the infantry. The District Magistrate gave orders to fire, and the rioters, carrying their dead and wounded with them and threatening vengeance, fell back into the city. In the crisis of these events a troop train with two hundred and seventy Gurkhas on board happened to be passing through Amritsar Station. The District Superintendent stopped the train ; the Gurkhas fell out, were armed at the fort, and very cheerfully fell into their places in support of the defence. Recruits also came from another quarter : among the visitors to the Horse Fair were "a stalwart band of Indian officers, sowars, and daffadars," who had come to buy mounts for the 12th Cavalry. They were led by their Rissaldar-Major, Khan Bahadur Fazal Dad Khan, from the city to the fort, where their offer of service was gratefully accepted.

While this desperate struggle was being waged on the frontier of the civil lines, the European women and children were being collected at one or two rendezvous, and were then brought in a long procession of army transport carts and *gharis* to the shelter of the fort. It was a headlong flight. The refugees had to go as they were, leaving everything behind. A mother complained bitterly to the soldiers who bore her off because she was not allowed to fetch her baby's bottle. Another with two daughters afterwards described her apprehension in one laconic phrase : "I had no pistol." As the mules and horses galloped down the road along the Aitchison Park the ladies in the swaying carts could

see and hear the mob like an approaching flood half way between them and the city gates. The fort is a desolate and primitive old place, used as a sort of military storehouse, and had a small guard of garrison gunners and half a dozen breech-loading guns. The officer commanding brought one of these guns out to the gateway, and trained it on the opposite gate in the city walls. Under this protection the fugitives passed into the fort. They were destined to spend many days of hot and horrid discomfort in its vaulted colonnades, but they were for the moment safe. The situation, said Captain Massey—and we can almost see him mopping his brow—was “well in hand.” But the defenders of the civil lines, as they looked across at the city of Amritsar, saw the smoke of a great conflagration.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RISING.

PLIGHT OF EUROPEANS IN AMRITSAR—THE INDIAN POLICE—
ASHRAF KHAN—BANKER VICTIMS—BRUTAL TREATMENT OF
MISS SHERWOOD—COMMUNICATIONS CUT.

MR MILES IRVING, in the letter which he wrote to his Commissioner two days before, had confessed to his impotence in Amritsar. "Any resolute action in the city," he had written, "would leave civil lines almost undefended. . . . As it is, we must abandon nine-tenths of the city to a riot, holding only the Kotwali and the communications, and even so will be hard set to defend the station and civil lines."

In these circumstances it might seem odd that Mr Irving should not have withdrawn the Europeans from the city, or even have warned them of the danger they ran. His explanation, which was accepted, was that he expected nothing more than a demonstration in the civil lines.¹ On the 6th of April the Banks had been guarded, but no attack had been made upon them. As there had been a *hartal* on the 6th, and no *hartal* had been announced

¹ Probably he had information that 'the Day' was to come later.

for the 10th, "guards on the Banks did not appear to be called for." ¹

Among the residents in the civil lines who had business in the city was a certain Mr Schmeding, the agent for a Dutch firm which dealt in hides. At eight o'clock on the morning of the 10th—that is to say, before the arrest of Satya Pal and Kitchlew—his native factotum in the city, a Muhammadan merchant, sent his closed carriage to Mr Schmeding's house with a letter, a woman's *burgka* (or veil), and a pair of slippers. The letter instructed Mr Schmeding to put on the costume, get into the carriage, and come to the house of his friend, where he would be safe, adding that no white man would be safe that day. Mr Schmeding did as he was told.

The Europeans in the city were less fortunate. The Mission ladies and the lady doctor were attending as usual to their classes and their patients; the British bankers sat in their offices doing no business and somewhat disturbed by the shouts of the crowds which streamed down Hall Bazar towards civil lines. Mr Ross and Mr J. W. Thompson of the Chartered Bank were rung up by Mr Stewart or Mr Scott of the National Bank and by Mr G. M. Thomson of the Alliance Bank, and told about the '*tamasha*.' "They could not," they said, "understand the crowds that were passing through the city, and thought there must be some trouble brewing." ²

Mr Jarman, the Municipal Engineer, was sitting

¹ See statement by Mr J. F. Rehill, 'Minutes of Evidence,' Disorders Inquiry Committee.

² "Punjab Disturbances, April 1919" (reprinted from 'Civil and Military Gazette,' Lahore), p. 13.

in his office in the Town Hall at about one o'clock, and heard the crowd rushing back from the civil lines, crying, "They have killed two of us! Bring *lathis*!" At that moment he received a telephone call from Mr Thomson of the Alliance Bank. "What is all this *tamasha* about?" said Mr Thomson. Then the line crossed. Mr Jarman tried to get another line, but in vain: the telephone had gone out of action. The sack of all that was British in Amritsar had begun.¹

It is a considerable city of a hundred and sixty thousand people, swarming within its walls in a maze of narrow streets and lanes and secret court-yards. The main street, the centre of its most important business, runs from Hall Gate in a straight line to two large blocks of public and municipal buildings joined by an arch across the roadway. One of these blocks holds the Town Hall, the Municipal Offices, and the Post Office; the other, on the opposite side of the street, is the Kotwali, the headquarters of the city police.

There were two police officers at the Kotwali. One was Khan Sahib Ahmed Jan, Deputy Superintendent of Police, a veteran of thirty years' service; the other Ashraf Khan, the City Inspector. But it is a little difficult to say from the evidence which of these two was in nominal command. The first was certainly the senior man by five years, according to the Report of the Hunter Committee, and was, as he himself said in his evidence, "supposed to be higher"; but the orders, such as they were, from the civil lines went to the other. It was

¹ "Punjab Disturbances," p. 13.

Ashraf Khan who brought the Khan Sahib to the Kotwali that morning; it was Ashraf Khan who warned the civil lines; it was evidently Ashraf Khan who was in real command. The Khan Sahib, when pressed on the subject by the Committee, said that he had given no orders to the City Inspector, who was "actually senior to me," and who was "directly in charge of the city." "I had," says the Deputy Superintendent, "no connection with the city at all." Ashraf Khan, in his evidence, says that he was "under the instructions" of the Khan Sahib; that he and the Khan Sahib lived together in the same house; that he brought his chief to the office that morning, and that there was no sort of difference between them.¹ I gather that the Khan Sahib was a fine old gentleman, a figurehead, and that Ashraf Khan was the man who really counted in the Kotwali.

Under this command there was a police reserve of seventy-five men with muskets and ammunition, and there were also belonging to the Kotwali a staff of fifteen or sixteen detectives, whose duty it was to go about and bring in reports. There were, besides, the police of the four divisions—about a hundred unarmed constables—scattered through Amritsar in the ordinary course, who, according to the Report, "did not come upon the stage in any part of the tragedy."

¹ Q. Had you yourself and your superior officer, Khan 'Sahib Ahmed Jan, no sort of quarrel that morning?

A. There was no quarrel.

Q. Did you at any time refuse to take orders from him on that morning?

A. Not at all. Had there been he would have reported.

At 8 A.M. on the morning of the 10th, Mr Plomer had sent for Ashraf Khan, had told him of the impending arrests, and had ordered him to be on the look-out, and make certain arrangements. He was to hold his reserves in the Kotwali.¹

Ashraf Khan then drew up his seventy-five men with fixed bayonets in the courtyard of the Kotwali and awaited orders and events. The events came, but the orders were lacking; what he did was *done on his own initiative*. The police commanded the road between the Kotwali and the Town Hall, and the road was closed to the threatening crowd that passed to and fro between the city and the civil lines and kept clear. The crowd surged up to the Kotwali, angrily asking where were Kitchlew and Satya Pal, and broke one of the glass doors. The police threatened to fire, but refrained. Then the rebels worked round to the back of the Town Hall, broke in that way, and set both the Town Hall and the Post Office on fire. Mr Jarman was sitting in his office with a loaded revolver; "but happily the police arrived on the scene under their very capable leader. I heard him give the order 'Charge!' and the crowd went away."²

Ashraf Khan escorted Mr Jarman away to the Kotwali. He ransacked the offices for Mr Jarman's

¹ Q. Did you receive any orders as to what you should do on that morning?

A. Mr Plomer had only instructed that seventy-five men of the reserve should be placed there and kept in reserve until he came himself.

Q. Did you receive any other orders besides this?

A. None besides this. As the time at his disposal was very short, he could not give any other instructions.

² "Punjab Disturbances," Mr Jarman's narrative. "The very capable leader" was Ashraf Khan.

cash-books and such papers and property as he could save, and got to work with the fire brigade.¹ In the midst of these disorders he was brought news of the Chartered Bank, which is about fifty yards from the Kotwali. The crowd were attacking it. He had already twenty-five men helping the fire brigade, but he sent twenty-five constables under a sub-inspector to save the Bank.

What happened at the Chartered Bank is told by Mr Ross.² He and Mr Thomson were looking out from the window at the crowds who were carrying along their wounded from the civil lines, and shouting "*Gandhi ki jai!*" "Burn and loot the Banks!" Then the crowd smashed the windows, and the two bankers "slid up a narrow dog-leg staircase and stayed there with an ink-bottle in each hand," while "all the *babus* went on the top of the roof and told the crowd the Sahibs were not inside." The rioters broke through the doors, found the bankers' hats, tore them to bits, tore up the bank books which lay about on the desks, wrenched off the handles of the safe in a vain endeavour to open it, the *babus* on the roof all the while yelling for the police. The Kotwali being less than a hundred yards distant, "the police soon arrived and cleared away the riotous intruders." It was the old Khan Sahib himself, with twenty-five of his men, who had charged at their head, shouting "*Pakaro! Pakaro!*" which is to say "Seize them! seize them!" and the crowd

¹ Lt.-Col. H. Smith, I.M.S., suggested that the Town Hall might have been burnt by somebody "interested in the destruction of the records," not improbable in view of the notorious corruption of Indian municipal government. ('Minutes of Evidence,' vol. iii. pp. 54, 55.)

² "Punjab Disturbances," p. 15.

had fled. The fire which had been started was extinguished, and at about four o'clock the two bankers were escorted through the gardens to the police station.

About a quarter of an hour after help was sent to the Chartered Bank, Ashraf Khan heard of an attack on the Alliance Bank, and sent twenty-five men under a sub-inspector to the rescue. They were too late to save Mr Thomson, who after emptying his revolver into the crowd was thrown over the verandah on to the road and beaten to death with *lathis*. The Bank furniture was thrown upon the body, drenched in kerosene oil, and set alight. The police arrived in time to bring the charred body of Mr Thomson back to the Kotwali. The building itself was not burnt, as it was owned by Indians,¹ whom the conspirators were careful not to antagonise.

Then Ashraf Khan had news of the National Bank, which stood a little withdrawn half-way down the Hall Bazar. According to his story, he sent the last of his reserves, but again they arrived too late. It had, as a matter of fact, been the first to be attacked. Mr Stewart and Mr Scott were battered to death with bludgeons, kerosene was poured over both the bodies and the furniture, the whole place set alight, and the mob, passing on to the go-downs, broke open the doors and looted the place of its valuables—bales of silk and other stuff, merchandise no doubt held as security, to the value, as the Committee found, of several lakhs of rupees.

¹ 'Disorders Inquiry Report,' p. 25. Evidence of Ashraf Khan and Ahmed Jan (vol. III. pp 140 *et seq.* and 81 *et seq.*).

The mob passed on to the other European institutions of the town. The Religious Tract Society's depot and hall were burnt, but the native Christians who lived in the upper storey contrived to escape through a window. The three sub post offices were looted; the Zenana Hospital was ransacked in a desperate attempt to find Mrs Easdon, the doctor. The invaders broke open rooms and cupboards, but missed the little cubby-hole in which Mrs Easdon was hiding; they even returned a second time on information given by a disloyal servant, but she again evaded them, and when news of the looting at the National Bank drew them away, a faithful *chaprasi* found her some Indian woman's clothing and smuggled her out to the house of a sub-inspector of police. Miss Sherwood, a missionary,¹ a devoted friend of the people, and, as the Committee says, "greatly respected," was bicycling from one of her schools to another when the mob met her with cries of "Kill her, she is English." She wheeled round and tried to escape, but was overtaken in "a lane, where she was well known and thought she would be safe." She was beaten with sticks where she fell; she got up, ran a little way, and was again felled, and was beaten on the ground. "Again she got up and tried to enter a house, but the door was slammed in her face. Falling from exhaustion, she again struggled to get up, but everything seemed to get dark, and she thought she had become

¹ Marcella Sherwood had been for nearly fifteen years in the Amritsar neighbourhood, working for the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, and was superintendent and manager of the City Mission schools for over 600 girls, Hindu and Muhammadan.—'Hansard,' 5th ser., vol. cxxxi, cols. 1756, 1757.

blind.”¹ A ruffian gave her a finishing blow with his *lathi*, and the mob, crying “She is dead,” passed on. She lay as one indeed dead in the gutter for some time, but was picked up by some Hindu shopkeepers, hidden away in a native house, treated with native ointments, and carried out to the fort by night, there to lie for weeks between life and death.

Although the smoke of the burning Banks told a plain story to the civil lines, the forces there were not considered adequate to attempt a rescue. Colonel Smith, nevertheless, made a dash into the city with his ambulance, reached the Mission Hospital, got about forty of the lady missionaries and Indian Christians into the vehicle, and took them to safety under the very *lathis* of the mob. He returned to the girls’ school, then being attacked. The rebels turned on him, and he escaped; but a police picket at the police lines crossing went to the rescue and saved the place.

The Deputy Commissioner looked on helplessly from the civil lines at the smoke of a city which, as he had foreseen, had passed out of his power. He tried to communicate with Lahore; but “the wires had been cut with a hammer and cold chisel.” Railway communications too were being attacked. A railway station on the line to Tarn Taran, the real headquarters of the Sikh countryside, was burnt; a police guard on the down Calcutta mail drove back a party of rebels who were trying to

¹ “She got up and staggered on till Wilyati caught her by her hair, and having knocked her down took off his shoe and gave her five or six blows on the head. She got up and struggled a little farther until she was finally knocked down by Sundar Singh, who struck her on the head with his *lathi*.”—(Statement of Punjab Government).

wreck the line towards Lahore; a goods train was looted in Chheharta railway station; by nightfall Amritsar was isolated from the outside world.

Mr Irving's gravest concern was for the country. He sent a magistrate to Tarn Taran "to do his best." "He could not spare troops, and he had to get local levies to do what they could. . . . If the villagers of the Manjha had turned loose, we should have had a situation not paralleled since the Mutiny."¹

At five o'clock, while Mr Miles Irving and his officers were despondently watching these encircling disorders, a motor-car arrived at the railway station with Mr Kitchen, the Commissioner, and Mr Donald, Inspector-General of Police, from Lahore. There were consultations as to whether a rescue in the city should be tried. Ashraf Khan had contrived to send out news of the situation; but Captain Massey represented that his force was not strong enough both to guard the civil lines and enter the city. They must await reinforcements. In the meantime the main railway line to Lahore was re-established.

At ten-thirty, from Lahore, reinforcements arrived, consisting of 175 men of the 1/124th Baluchis under Major Macdonald, and 125 British infantry, 2/6th Royal Sussex Regiment. Major Macdonald took over command from Captain Massey, and was given authority by the Commissioner—"the situation being beyond civil control he must take steps as the military situation demanded."

¹ 'Minutes of Evidence,' vol. iii. pp. 6 and 7. The Manjha is that great area round Amritsar and Lahore which is peopled chiefly by Sikh land-owners and peasants, a stout-hearted people, warlike by nature and religion, and inclined to turbulence.

The first thing to be done was to relieve the Kotwali. In the dead of night a column pushed its way through Hall Gate, and found only an empty street littered with the spoils of the Bank go-downs and broken telephone wires. At the Kotwali, Ashraf Khan handed over the four Europeans whom he had rescued.¹ " We left," said Mr Jarman, " with an escort, taking the body of Thomson, and picking up the bodies of Stewart and Scott from the National Bank. They were sent to the mortuary in the civil lines, and we came *via* the station to the fort, arriving about 1.30 A.M., and wearing *pagris*." ²

¹ Sergeant Parsnade, who was in the city " to see the *tamasha*," had been rescued from the mob by Ashraf Khan

² " Punjab Disturbances," p. 15.

CHAPTER XVII.

JALLIANWALA BAGH.

GUARDING THE RAILWAYS—"A VERY BIG SHOW COMING"—
 GENERAL DYER REACHES AMRITSAR—REBEL PROCLAMATIONS
 —THE CRISIS IN THE PUNJAB—THE GENERAL GIVES NOTICE—
 THE DEFENSIVE IMPOSSIBLE—THE ORDER TO SHOOT.

ON the 6th April there had been a *hartal* in Jullundur city, but it had passed off quietly. General Dyer, taking over his command that day from Lieutenant-Colonel Hynes,¹ 1st-25th London Regiment, who had been acting in his absence, went on with certain arrangements which he had planned early in the year. They suggest expectation of trouble.

In particular he looked to his railways. It may here be explained, since it is a cardinal fact in the situation, that the Punjab has only one main railway line, which passes over six large rivers, and on which communication with the North-West Frontier depends. General Dyer organised a service of pickets and guards at the culverts and bridges, and prepared the defence of the great bridge-head on the Beas River. For another immediate necessity, an Intelligence Service, he had the materials to his hand: they consisted in the main of retired native

¹ Lieut.-Colonel B. M. Hynes, late Royal Sussex Regiment.

officers, friends of his own or friends of his friends, who lived mostly in the villages, but some in the towns, and were accustomed to stroll in for a chat with the General Sahib. They could be heard by the ladies on the verandah, laughing very much over the General's jokes. General Dyer had all the news of the bazar and the countryside.

The 7th, 8th, and 9th April passed quietly—so quietly that Captain Briggs "thought that the chances of any trouble had gone"; but on Thursday, 10th April, at about 4 P.M., a code wire came from Amritsar urgently asking for British infantry, gunners, and an aeroplane; a little later another from Divisional Headquarters at Lahore, "ordering us to send 100 British and 100 Muhammadan troops to Amritsar." Then a third code message from Amritsar, with the news of the killing and burning, and the General decided to send 200 Indian troops instead of 100. They went down to the station to commandeer the first train to Amritsar, and found they could get nothing before 3 A.M. on the following morning; then they went to regimental headquarters to give the orders, and later to the telegraph office to send a message that reinforcements were coming. On the way Captain Briggs said to General Dyer, "If the situation at Amritsar is really serious, the mob will have cut the telegraph wire." At the telegraph office they were told that the wires had been cut since four in the afternoon. By 8 P.M. they got a message through from the railway station by way of Ludhiana and Lahore.

There was a dinner party at Flagstaff House that night, and the General and his staff, while keeping

up appearances with the guests, contrived to take turns at the telephone. By 1 A.M. on the 11th they sent off their relief force by a special train which had come from Lahore.¹ Major F. A. S. Clarke (attached to the Londons) was given orders to reach Amritsar at all costs. They did arrive—at 5.15 on the morning of the 11th. By instructions, Major Clarke handed over his column to the senior officer from Lahore, and returned to Jullundur that same day and reported to the General “an unsatisfactory situation which the civil authorities had given up attempting to control.”

That afternoon a message came from Lahore: If the situation at Jullundur permitted, General Dyer should proceed to Amritsar and take charge there. The General motored over to the city to see the Commissioner, and discussed the rather dangerous state of affairs. The city had been very much excited by the news of Amritsar which followed the news of Gandhi. A *hartal* was actually in progress. Nevertheless they could manage with the forces in hand. The General could go to Amritsar.

Before departing he drew his son aside, and spoke to him with unusual seriousness. “Mussulmans and Hindus,” he said, “had united. I have been expecting this,” he went on; “there is a very big show coming.” He added that he would have liked Ivon to come along, but that he could not be spared by his commanding officer. It was perhaps as well. “I must leave,” he concluded, “your

¹ The composition of this column was :—

A Company, 1-25th Londons (100 Rifles).

100 Rifles, 2-151st Infantry.

100 Rifles from Frontier Force Regimental Depôts at Jullundur.

mother and Alice in this house, although there is the same danger from Jullundur city. You will sleep under a tree beside the verandah near your mother and cousin. There will be Indian guards at both gates."

These were grave words ; but grave events were happening that day in Northern India. On the news of Gandhi and Amritsar the great city of Lahore rose in premature rebellion. There were desperate affrays between police and cavalry on one side and mobs armed with stones and *lathis* on the other. By nightfall twenty-three had been wounded and four killed ; and although the civil lines were saved, the city remained in the hands of the mob. The rebel proclamations threw off all disguises. There was no longer need to talk of the Rowlatt Act save as a watchword for violence. Thus the 'Danda Akhbar' (bludgeon newspaper) of Lahore announced : "When the news (of the arrest of Gandhi) reached Amritsar, the Danda Fauj (bludgeon army) of the brave Sikhs set fire to the Bank, the railway station, and the electric power house. They cut the telegraph wires and removed the railway line. The Danda Fauj of Amritsar bravely killed a number of European monkeys, and their Sikh regiments have revolted and deserted. O Hindu, Muhammadan, and Sikh brethren, enlist at once in the Danda Army and fight with bravery against the English monkeys. . . . Fight on. . . . This is the command of Mahatma Gandhi." ¹ In the cantonments of Northern India agitators stealthily incited the Indian troops to mutiny. What other events

¹ 'Report,' p. 38.

were happening to justify General Dyer's appraisal we shall presently see.

The General and his staff left Jullundur by motor-car at 6 P.M. on the 11th, and reached Amritsar three hours later. They found the railway station in a state of tumult, filled with an Anglo-Indian crowd of would-be fugitives clamouring for railway transport. The General restored order. "Gentlemen," he said, "why are you here? Your place is to protect the ladies. You will report to me."

The General and his young staff officers, Captain Briggs and Captain Bostock, seem at once to have inspired a new spirit of confidence and courage in Amritsar. They transferred military headquarters that same night to the Ram Bagh, where they organised a camp. They reorganised the troops with smaller pickets, so as to have a larger striking force. General Dyer went into the city some time before midnight, and brought out Ashraf Khan, so that he might have first-hand information of the doings and the leaders of the rebels, and had two conferences, one before and one after that visit, with the Deputy Commissioner, the place of meeting being a railway carriage in the station. Mr Miles Irving by that time looked like a man broken by fatigue, anxiety, and the weight of responsibilities too heavy for his shoulders. The easy confidence and manifest strength of the General must have been very reassuring to this harassed official, who freely handed over a situation altogether beyond his control. The main result of the conference was the following document, given to General Dyer at midnight on the 11th April:—

“ The troops have orders to restore order in Amritsar and to use all force necessary.

No gathering of persons nor processions of any sort will be allowed.

All gatherings will be fired on.

Any persons leaving the city in groups of more than four will be fired on.

Respectable persons should keep indoors.

(Sd.) MILES IRVING, D.C.,
Amritsar, 11/4/1919.”

When the General came to reckon up his troops, he found a strength of less than twelve hundred men—a miscellaneous crowd of detachments. The British infantry were trained and had seen service, but many of the Indian troops were untried and almost untrained, and some of them were under suspicion.¹ With this force his immediate purpose was to bring to order a city of a hundred and sixty thousand people or the mob which governed it. Since the events of the 10th, indeed, Amritsar had been like a hive of bees which had swarmed once and was ready to swarm again. The rebels had asked leave and had been permitted to send a party outside the walls to bury their dead; but on the 11th it was reported in the city that Lahore Fort had been taken, that the troops had mutinied, and that the Lieutenant-Governor had been killed,² and the false news greatly heartened the mob. The city was described by Mr Miles Irving as “un-

¹ A message was sent to Lahore on the 11th from Amritsar that “Baluchis on guard are showing signs of insubordination.” On the same day Mr Kitchin wrote to his Government from Amritsar, “I am anxious not to reduce British force until we know that the Indian troops are sound.”

² Government House War Diaries, No 12.

penitently hostile," under a mob organised as a sort of army and a sort of Government. "It might," as Mr Irving afterwards described it, "be the Sarkar outside, but inside it was *Hindu-Musulmanon ki Hakumat*." Moreover, the country people of the Manjha, having heard that the Government had fallen and that there was "any amount of loot in Amritsar," were audibly and visibly stirring. Reports reached the police and the Deputy-Commissioner of gangs of villagers coming in with their ox-carts and donkeys to carry away the plunder. Ashraf Khan had information of a plan formed among the villagers to enter the city by different ways, and then collect at one place and start plundering.¹ A cattle and horse fair had brought many strangers to the town. There was to be a religious festival next day at the Golden Temple. The air was full of rumours and reports of troubles to come.

To await events was not the General's way. Early in the morning of 12th April he had the city reconnoitred by aeroplane, which reported crowds at various points. At 10 A.M. he set out with all available troops—125 British, 310 Indians, and two armoured cars—on a march through the city. The crowds bore themselves insolently, refusing to disperse, spitting on the ground as the troops passed, and at the Sultanwind Gate raising shouts of "Hindu Musulman ki jai!" General Dyer might then have opened fire, but he refrained: the people should have fair warning. By his direction Ashraf Khan arrested two of the most dangerous ringleaders,

¹ See evidence of Mr Miles Irving and annexures to evidence of Ashraf Khan

Bugga and Dina Nath. In the evening the General issued a proclamation prohibiting all meetings and gatherings, which would be "dispersed at once under military law," and warning the people that they would be held responsible for any violence in the environs of Amritsar. The city was continuously patrolled, and the gates were picketed.

On the 12th of April, not Amritsar only but the whole Punjab rocked in crisis between order and anarchy. There were *hartals* in many cities. At Kasur the rebels broke into riot, murder, and destruction. In Lahore the crowds, still in possession of the city, stoned the police and cavalry, until at last they were driven off with one killed and twenty-eight wounded. News spread to Delhi that Lahore was being looted and the troops about to rise. The conspirators at Delhi, with the help of some railway telegraphists, sent orders over the whole railway system "to look out and do needful at once" on receipt of the words 'The Rowlatt.' There were strikes and outrages all along the North-Western Railway.

In Lahore, at Government House, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, unmoved in the midst of the rising tumult, issued his orders; but in Delhi, British authority fell so low that negotiations were opened with the ringleaders. "Delhi," said the 'Civil and Military Gazette,' "stood alone in India in witnessing the extraordinary spectacle of the authorities parleying with the leaders of the agitation, while a threatening and turbulent mob gathered round the very building where the Conference was going on."

General Dyer, as he afterwards pointed out, was

being isolated; the railways and telegraphs were being cut; skilled gangs of wreckers were at work on railway and telegraph, apparently 'according to plan'; armoured trains found it difficult or impossible to get through in any direction; and under the influence of some unseen hand the villages were refusing to send in supplies to the troops and the civil lines.

How was he to fight the rebels, how was he to bring them to decisive action in the narrow streets and winding lanes of Amritsar? It was a problem, as he afterwards explained to Mrs Dyer, which seemed to him, with his little force, insoluble, unless, indeed, he could get them somehow in the open. And that seemed too much to hope for.

At 9 A.M. on the 13th General Dyer marched into the city again with his column of troops to make his proclamation.¹ If property was damaged, the people were held responsible; if they came together, they would be dispersed by force of arms. The thing was done solemnly, even ceremoniously, Ashraf Khan leading the way with his sub-inspector

¹ It is hereby proclaimed to all whom it may concern that no person residing in the city is permitted or allowed to leave the city in his own private or hired conveyance or on foot, without a pass from one of the following officers.

[Then followed a list of officers from whom the passes could be obtained].

No person residing in Amritsar city is permitted to leave his house after 8 P.M.

Any person found in the streets after 8 P.M. is liable to be shot.

No procession of any kind is permitted to parade the streets in the city or any part of the city or outside of it at any time.

Any such processions or any gathering of four men will be looked upon and treated as an unlawful assembly and dispersed by force of arms if necessary.

of police, Obaidullah, on horseback, followed by Malik Fateh Khan, the Naib Tahsildar of Amritsar, in a bamboo cart with a man beside him beating a drum. Then came a detachment of British troops, with General Dyer and the Deputy Commissioner in one motor-car and the two policemen, Mr Rehill and Mr Plomer, in another. The proclamation was made first at the Government Gardens. It was "read out in Urdu twice and thrice, and afterwards explained in Punjabi twice and thrice," and then the procession went forward, distributing hand-bills of the proclamation printed in Urdu as it went, through the Ram Bagh to the Kotwali, then to the Queen's statue, which stands within two or three hundred paces of the Golden Temple—in all to some nineteen different points of the city of Amritsar at every one of which the announcement was thus solemnly proclaimed. The shops were closed in *hartal*; the people crowded round at every point, "bent upon hearing what they were told"; they "clapped their hands and laughed"; "they jeered at us." A little later a mock procession went through the streets beating a kerosene tin, and proclaiming "The British Raj was at an end"; "No one need be afraid of being fired at."¹ Some of them even pressed up to Obaidullah, saying, "We will hold a meeting, let us be fired at"; and at 12.40, while General Dyer was yet in the city, he was told that, in defiance of his proclamation, a meeting was to be held at the Jallianwala Bagh that afternoon.

¹ 'Minutes of Evidence,' vol. iii. In particular the evidence of the Naib Tahsildar and Mr Plomer.

General Dyer returned to the Ram Bagh at about one o'clock pondering the news. "I had," he afterwards told the Committee of Inquiry, "to consider the military situation and make up my mind as to what to do, which took me a certain amount of time." It was apparent to him that the moment had come of which Mr Miles Irving had written: "We shall have to stand up for our authority sooner or later . . . we shall have to be ready to try conclusions to the end to see who governs Amritsar."

Taking a wider view, there was the cutting of the telegraphs and the railways all round him. "I thought," he said to the Committee, "they were trying to isolate me and my forces. Everything pointed to the fact that there was a widespread movement, and that it was not confined to Amritsar alone." The night before he had sent a party of British troops to Ashrapur Mission Hospital near Atari to rescue the Mission ladies; in response to urgent demands he had sent an Indian contingent to Dhariwal and a Gurkha contingent from Bakloh to protect the small British colonies at Gurdaspur; he had, besides, to maintain a garrison at Tarn Taran, where the Treasury had been attacked. The attitude of the Sikhs was as yet undisclosed; but there were these disquieting signs, and there were, besides, the Ghadr revolutionaries and a vast number of demobilised soldiers to complicate the position. General Dyer understood the Sikh well: his love of a loot and a fight. He agreed with Mr Miles Irving: "If the villagers of the Manhja turned

loose, they would have a situation unparalleled since the Mutiny."

Taking a still wider view, what had happened in Amritsar was part of a general movement: the *hartals* in every town and city: Delhi, Lahore, Kasur, Ahmedabad, and elsewhere; the attempts to seduce the Indian Army; the Muhammadan threats of a *jehad*; possibly also the dangerous situation in Afghanistan not obscurely threatening an attack on the frontier. It might even be connected—so it was suspected at the time—with the revolution then raging in Egypt.

Whether he took the narrower or the wider view, General Dyer saw the position clearly with a soldier's eye. He could not remain on the defensive. His forces were not only small; part of them was wanted elsewhere, and the rebellion was spreading. On the 10th the Amritsar mob had struck a blow that was reverberating over India. It had given heart to their cause. They had tasted blood, they had not been punished, they began to feel themselves masters of the situation. Therefore, with a wasting, he opposed a growing force. His best hope lay in immediate action.

So much was clear. But how to strike? In the narrow streets, among the high houses and mazy lanes and courtyards of the city the rebels had the advantage of position. They could harass him and avoid his blow. Street fighting he knew to be a bloody, perilous, inconclusive business, in which, besides, the innocent were likely to suffer more than the guilty. Moreover, if the rebels chose their ground

cunningly, and made their stand in the neighbourhood of the Golden Temple, there was the added risk of kindling the fanaticism of the Sikhs. Thus he was in this desperate situation: he could not wait, and he could not fight.

But this unexpected gift of fortune, this unhopedor defiance, this concentration of the rebels in an open space—it gave him such an opportunity as he could not have devised. It separated the guilty from the innocent, it placed them where he would have wished them to be—within reach of his sword. The enemy had committed such another mistake as prompted Cromwell to exclaim at Dunbar, “The Lord hath delivered them into my hands.”

The mind of General Dyer being mathematical and military, it exercised itself upon the following problems. Taking the original garrison of Amritsar and the reinforcements which had arrived together, he had a strength of 407 British and 739 Indian troops. As the reinforcements had only arrived on the 11th instant, and as, moreover, the whole consisted of drafts and detachments of various units, it could hardly be called an organised force.

Lahore, on the expectation of fighting, was urgently demanding the return of the troops it had sent on the outbreak of trouble.¹ The 9th Gurkhas (207 men) had been *en route* for Peshawar, and could not be detained much longer.² There were certain indispensable duties, guards, and pickets, which absorbed

¹ 2/6th Bn. Royal Sussex (130 men) returned to Lahore on the morning of the 13th April; 1/124th Baluchis (181 men) left for Lahore on the 14th.

² They left for Peshawar on the 19th April.

the greater part of his force. Thus, for example, the British troops were finding :—

	DUTY.	MEN.
Station pickets		37
Bridge guard		11
Detachment, Tarn Taran		22
Armed train to Pathankote		26
Armoured train		17
Fort Govindgarh		86
Cantonments		190
		<hr/>
		389

And Indian troops were finding :—

	DUTY.	MEN.
Detachment, Dhariwal		26
Detachment, Tarn Taran		34
Train escorts		80
Repairing line escort		10
Construction train		10
Blockhouse on railway from Amritsar to Atari		40
Amritsar pickets		132
Kotwali (reinforcing police)		50
		<hr/>
		382

Taking reliefs and regimental guards and duties into account, however he balanced these figures, he could lay his hand upon only something under four hundred men. Of these, he determined to leave a reserve of fifty to protect his base at the Ram Bagh, to post five pickets each forty strong round the city, which left him with fifty rifles, forty un-

armed Gurkhas, and two armoured cars to deal with the Jallianwala Bagh.¹

At four o'clock in the afternoon Mr Rehill came to camp with the news that a crowd of about a thousand were already assembled, and that more were on the way. This was confirmed by a Mr Lewis, manager of the Crown Cinema, who had been through the city in disguise. Thereupon the General, having, as he afterwards said, "matured his plans," set out once more. He and Captain Briggs rode together in his motor-car, followed by the two armoured cars and a police car with Mr Rehill and Mr Plomer, the Sepoys marching before and behind him. As they went, the pickets dropped out to take their several stations; but the little force itself went straight on through the nearest city gate, past the ruins of the Town Hall and the garrisoned Kotwali, through a criss-cross of narrow streets beyond, until it came upon a lane so narrow that the cars had to be left behind. The General, leading his column through this defile, came slap upon the meeting—"an immense crowd, packed in a square, listening to a man on a platform, who was speaking and gesticulating with his hands."² The place in which it squatted was not, as the name suggests, a garden, but an open space, dusty, neglected, disreputable; oblong in shape, rather over two hundred yards in length, with houses on all four sides; between the houses boundary walls low enough for a man to

¹ The striking force selected by General Dyer was wholly Indian, and consisted of: 25 rifles, 1/9th Gurkhas; 25 rifles, 54th Sikhs F.F. and 59th Rifles F.F.; 40 Gurkhas armed only with kukris; 2 armoured cars.

² Report of Captain Briggs.

leap over, and with several entrances, one of them, the widest, at the farther end.

The passage by which the General entered was at a point raised above the rest of the ground, so that he looked down upon the assembly. It was composed wholly of men, chiefly townspeople, but some from the country, the nearest of them about eight or nine yards from the wall at which he stood ; the orator " absolutely in the centre, as far as one could judge, maybe within fifty or sixty yards " ; the main part round the rostrum, but " most of them on the farther side." ¹

In the light of the trial by Mr Justice Broadway's Commission of the Amritsar conspirators, we can judge that assembly.² The organiser of the meeting, Dr Muhammad Bashir, had been deep in the rebellion. According to the judgment, he had incited the mob to the attack upon the National Bank, and " was regarded as a leader by the people from the 10th onward." It was to his house that Ratto, Bugga, and the other gang leaders went for orders ; but although he organised the meeting of the 13th, he was discreet enough not to attend. He was sentenced to death for criminal conspiracy and waging war, but was afterwards pardoned.

Before General Dyer arrived no less than seven speakers had addressed the crowd. Of these, Hans Raj, who on his own showing had conspired to wage war and commit murder, turned informer to save his neck ; Abdul Aziz and Gurbakhsh Rai were

¹ Disorders Inquiry Committee, General Dyer's evidence.

² The text of the judgment in the Amritsar conspiracy case was published in the ' Civil and Military Gazette,' Lahore, 10th July 1919.

convicted of waging war, and sentenced to transportation for life; Rai Ram Singh was similarly sentenced for taking part in the murders at the National Bank; Dhain Singh absconded, and so escaped trial for murder and waging war; Abdul Majid, who also absconded, was believed to be one of the murderers of Mr Scott, and Brij Gopi Nath, a postal clerk in the National Bank, who had led the murderers to the room of Mr Stewart, was sentenced to transportation for life.

Such were the speakers who had spoken before the troops arrived. Brij Gopi Nath had just finished reciting a poem of his own composition inciting the crowd to murder. When the General came on the scene, the orator whom he saw on the chair was Durga Das, the editor of the 'Wakt,' the organ of the Amritsar conspiracy.

The character of the mob may also be presumed from the events which had gone before. They had met in defiance of the proclamation to listen to their favourite orators. There is no reason to doubt that those who sat at the feet of Durga Das were substantially the same crowd as those who had murdered the Bank managers and looted the Bank go-downs. Lord Meston, no friend of General Dyer, afterwards admitted in the House of Lords that the mob was being harangued "presumably not in the interests of peace and order but with incitations to violence." "The point," he continued, "had been much debated, whether they were armed. It is perfectly true that they had no lethal weapons, that they had no firearms, and it is also alleged that they were not ostensibly armed

with bludgeons. But I have never known an Indian crowd of that type and of that character that had not a very large supply of bludgeons somewhere or other near. And those who know the Indian *lathi*, heavily shod with iron, five feet long, capable of battering out a man's brains in a few seconds, will realise how dangerous a weapon that bludgeon might be, and would be, in the hands of infuriated men at close quarters. Any mob so armed is dangerous, and the mob that faced General Dyer was undoubtedly dangerous. If there had been any faltering or hesitation, it is quite certain that General Dyer's men might have been rushed and overwhelmed and cudgelled to death."¹

The General turned to his Brigade-Major and asked him what he thought the numbers were. Captain Briggs hazarded "about five thousand or so"; but it was afterwards put much higher.² It was at any rate a crowd so big that had it rushed the little force it could have destroyed it, either with *lathis* or with naked hands. General Dyer had this risk in mind; he gave the crowd neither time nor further warning. "I considered from a military point of view," he afterwards told the Committee, "that I should fire imme-

¹ 'Parliamentary Debates,' Lords, 20th July 1920 (Fifth Series, vol. xli. cols. 349-350). Mr Justice M'Cardie evidently found it proved that the crowd was at least partially armed with bludgeons, since he says in his judgment: "There were six thousand people, as General Dyer says, twenty thousand as the defendant's witness says—those from the country with their sticks and some of them from the town with their sticks."—*O'Dwyer v. Nair*.

² The Minority Report of the Disorders Inquiry Committee says: "The numbers of those attending the meeting are varyingly estimated from fifteen thousand to twenty thousand, but General Dyer at the time believed it to be five thousand or six thousand."

diately; that if I did not do so I should fail in my duty." He deployed his force to right and left and opened fire. "The men," says Captain Briggs, "did not hesitate to fire, and I saw no man firing high." The mob had often been told by their leaders and their Press that the British troops fired blank cartridge.¹ Mr Plomer heard afterwards that Durga Das shrieked this assurance to the meeting. It may have been so, although there is only hearsay evidence. What happened we know. The vast crowd which had been squatting on its heels seemed to rise in a wave and subside and rise again. Then it split into two mobs in the opposite corners of the Bagh. Captain Briggs had a fleeting impression that "they were meaning to rush us." He called the General's attention to the groups which appeared to be collecting for that purpose, and General Dyer, getting the same impression, "therefore gave orders to direct fire on these two crowds." It was an illusion. Waves of the panic-stricken rushing into culs-de-sacs rushed back again, and disappeared as they found an exit—save for the residue of the wounded and the dead.

The time the firing lasted was put by Mr Plomer at ten minutes. He was behind the force, and when he entered it was nearly over and the crowd 150 yards away. Mr Rehill, who must have come in very shortly after, did not see the firing, as it was already over. It is certain that the fifty men fired in all 1650 rounds, or 33 rounds per man. "If I

¹ 'The Aftab' newspaper of 6th April 1919, describing the riots of the 30th March in the Chandni Chouk of Delhi, says that the Gurkhas levelled their rifles at the breasts of the crowd, but "fired blank cartridges in the air."

had fired a little," General Dyer told the Committee, "I should have been wrong in firing at all."

While he had still ammunition in the pouches of his men, and while a large part of the crowd was still in the Square, he gave orders to cease fire, and then, "without counting or inspecting the casualties," as he did not dare to risk delay and the chance of an ambush in the narrow streets, marched back through the city to his camp at the Ram Bagh. At 10 o'clock that night, at the head of a force, General Dyer visited his pickets and marched through the city. It was "absolutely quiet, and not a soul to be seen."¹

¹ General Dyer's Report on Operations to "Gen. Staff Division," quoted in evidence. See also his statement to the Army Council and the Report of Captain F. C. Briggs, D.S.O., appended thereto.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SIKHS.

SIR M. O'DWYER AT LAHORE—ATTACK ON EUROPEANS—TRUCULENT PROCLAMATIONS—APPROVAL OF DYER'S ACTION—MARTIAL LAW—THE EFFECT OF AMRITSAR—"THE DECISIVE FACTOR"—A GRATEFUL POPULACE—THE CRAWLING ORDER—"A SIKH EVEN AS NIKALSEYN SAHIB."

WHILE these things were happening in Amritsar, Sir Michael O'Dwyer was facing revolution in his capital of Lahore. The Lieutenant-Governor was an official of long experience, of a character just and magnanimous; in temper cool, wary, and resolute. For six months before, seeing trouble ahead, he had used all his influence, which was great, in rallying the doubtful to the cause of peace, warning the implacable of the danger of their courses. With the country people, who loved as well as trusted him, he succeeded; but the towns, despite all he could do, fell more and more into the hands of the conspirators.

When at last he externed Gandhi and deported Kitchlew and Satya Pal, he precipitated the trouble he had laboured to avert. For this he has been charged with provocation; but, as he afterwards explained, he acted on the precedent of Lajpat Rai

and Ajit Singh in 1907, and thought, as in that case, "their removal far more likely to disorganise an agitation rapidly growing dangerous than to lead to open disorder."¹

About 12.30 on the 10th April he heard of the Amritsar rising, and at once asked General Beynon, Divisional Commander at Lahore, to send help, and to make dispositions for the defence of the capital. He was barely in time; by the afternoon the news of Amritsar reached the city, and a great mob, headed by a black flag, swarmed out of Lohari Gate through Anarkali Bazar into the Upper Mall.² Cantonments being five miles away, Sir Michael had foreseen that the troops might be too late to save the civil lines, and had sent a magistrate³ and police officer to organise the resistance before soldiers arrived.

These officers drew a line of police across the Mall; the rioters attacked the Deputy Commissioner, knocked down the Deputy Superintendent of Police, and were forcing the men back along the road when the cavalry arrived. The police fired with buckshot, and the two forces together drove the mob back into the Anarkali Bazar. There the mob on the house-tops joined the mob in the street in a fusilade of stones, but the police fired again, and the rebels withdrew into the city, leaving several killed and wounded in their hands. Another part of the mob had turned aside to wreck the Government telegraph office, but were faced by

¹ Statement of Punjab Government to Disorders Inquiry Committee.

² The European quarter, which lies outside the southern walls of the city.

³ The Deputy Commissioner.

British bayonets, which had arrived in the nick of time. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who had given shelter to the women and children of the civil lines at Government House, thought it safe to return them to their homes under the shelter of the reinforcements.

Thus, as at Amritsar, the European quarter was saved from the first rush; but the rebellion continued. Next morning all shops were closed, and a great mob gathered in the Badshahi Mosque, to be excited beyond measure by an ex-sepoy, one Balwant Singh, who proclaimed that the Indian troops had mutinied in the cantonments; that they had killed hundreds of British soldiers—he with his own hand had killed six,—and that they were now marching on Lahore and Amritsar. The boaster was garlanded and carried in triumph to the pulpit, but as this elevation struck him dumb, the rebels left the Mosque, destroying as they went pictures of the King and Queen, and then marched two deep, with their *lathis* as if they were rifles at the slope or at the trail, halting here and there to kneel as if to fire, or to listen to the oration of one Chanan Din, who proclaimed that they no longer obeyed the King of England, but looked to Germany, Turkey, and Afghanistan.

Sir Michael O'Dwyer was not the sort of man to leave the mob in control of his capital, but he gave it fair warning. He first called together the notables of the Province, and told them that “while Government was quite able to deal with the situation itself, it would probably be settled more speedily with their active co-operation.” He rejected the suggestion to enter into negotiations with the rebel leaders, and

issued a warning to the people to avoid public meetings, to obey the law, and not to listen to evil rumours.

On the 12th April a force of 1500 troops, British and Indian, entered Lahore city and occupied the city gates, the water-works, and other strategic positions. It found everywhere such posters as this, for example :—

We are the Indian nation. . . . The English are . . . like monkeys. . . . O brethren gird up your loins and fight. Kill and be killed . . . turn those mean monkeys from your holy country . . .¹

The soldiers were stoned but held their fire, and the police had a brush with the mob outside Badshahi Mosque.

Meanwhile the rebellion spread ; at Kasur, not far from the capital, a mob attacked the railway station, the Tahsil, the Munsifi, and the Treasury, stormed a railway train, murdered two British soldiers, and wounded several British officers, who narrowly escaped with their lives. General Beynon sent out an armoured train to save Kasur from complete destruction, and Sir Michael O'Dwyer warned the politicians that if the rebellion continued martial law would be proclaimed. By the morning of Sunday, the 13th April, the Lieutenant-Governor could see plainly that he was faced by a general rebellion. Two of his chief cities were in the hands of mobs ; his railway lines were being torn up, the railway stations looted and burnt, trains derailed,

¹ Disorders Inquiry Committee Report, p. 38.

and all telegraph lines cut; attempts to seduce the Indian Army and the police were reported at many points; illegal *hartals* were being enforced throughout the Province, and the Satyagraha vow was gaining thousands of adherents. His Honour, therefore, after consulting with his General and his Chief Justice, sent a wireless message to Simla (all other communications having been cut) proposing martial law in Lahore and Amritsar. The message being urgent, was sent *en clair*. It was picked up by the Bolsheviks at Tashkend, and our Consul-General at Meshed querulously protested that even if the Punjab Government was having a bad time, it seemed unnecessary to publish the news to Central Asia.

On the evening of the 13th there had been rumours of something serious from Amritsar. At 3.30 A.M. on the morning of the 14th, the Lieutenant-Governor was aroused by two messengers who had come by motor, one being Mr Waythen, Principal of the Sikh Khalsa College, and the other Mr Jacob of the Indian Civil Service. They brought a letter from Mr Miles Irving dated 1 A.M. that morning, "by the hand of Mr Jacob who happens to be here." Mr Miles Irving described the reading of the two proclamations forbidding public meetings. He added :—

"A meeting had been advertised for 4.30 that day, and the General had said he would attend it with 100 men. I did not think that the meeting would be held, or if held would disperse, so I asked the General to excuse me, as I wanted to go to the Fort.

I learn that the Military found a large meeting of some

five thousand men, and opened fire without warning, killing about two hundred. Firing went on for about ten minutes.

I went through the city at night with the General, and all was absolutely still.

I much regret that I was not present, but when out previously with the Military the greatest forbearance had been used in making the people disperse. I had absolutely no idea of the action taken."

Now this exculpatory message omitted what Sir Michael O'Dwyer most wanted to know, and when he examined the messengers they unwittingly misled him, for they said that only British troops had been used, and that no civil officer was with General Dyer at the time. It was the employment of British soldiers which caused the Lieutenant-Governor most anxiety, since he foresaw what use the conspirators would make of such a circumstance. Nor could he understand how a soldier of General Dyer's experience should have committed such a blunder. As to the number of the slain, that was a question, as he saw at once, of more or less, to be judged upon military considerations. When he asked his visitors for their opinion on the effect to be expected, Mr Waythen, who 'seemed rattled,' said, "Tomorrow the Manjha will be up," but Mr Kitchin, the Commissioner, who had returned from Amritsar on the 11th April, and who knew the country better, gave a contrary opinion. "I don't think," he said, "that the Manjha Sikh has many scruples about shedding blood himself, and I don't think he will object to it in a good cause."

The Lieutenant-Governor at once communicated the substance of the message to the Government of

India by wire, adding a summary of the general situation, which was then most critical; he expressed no definite opinion on General Dyer's action because he had not yet received his report.¹

Later in the day (the 14th of April) 'Sir Michael got into touch by telephone with General Beynon, who had just received from his Brigadier a concise and detailed report of the operations from the 11th to 13th April. General Dyer recounted his arrival at Amritsar; his consultation with the Deputy Commissioner and the police officials; the measures he took on the 12th; the proclamations issued against meetings or followings, and the warnings that they would be fired on; the information he received of the Jallianwala Bagh meeting, which "I did not think would take place in the face of what I had done"; the confirmation by the police; his march to the Jallianwala Bagh; his entry by "a very narrow lane"; then he added:—

"I realised that my Force was small, and to hesitate might induce attack. I immediately opened fire and dispersed the crowd.

I estimate that between two hundred and three hundred of the crowd were killed. My party fired 1650 rounds.

I returned to my Headquarters about 18.00 hours.

At 22.00 hours, accompanied by a Force, I visited all my pickets and marched through the City in order to make sure that my orders as to inhabitants not being out of their houses after 20.00 had been obeyed.

The City was absolutely quiet and not a soul to be seen.

I returned to Headquarters at midnight. The inhabitants have asked permission to bury their dead in accordance with my orders. This I am allowing."

¹ 'India as I Knew It,' p. 283.

His despatch greatly reassured Sir Michael, since it contained the information that General Dyer had used not British but Gurkha and Indian troops. General Beynon added that he fully approved of General Dyer's action, and asked if he might add His Honour's approval, which "he thought General Dyer would be glad to hear." The Lieutenant-Governor—"very busy at the time with the news of serious disorders coming in from all sides"—replied that he approved. How this opinion was confirmed upon a more full consideration we shall presently see.¹

In the meantime, the emergency was so urgent that there was neither leisure nor inclination to pass nice judgments on past events. That day Sir Michael O'Dwyer arrested three of the mob leaders in Lahore city, heard the news that Gujranwala railway station and kutcheri were in flames; and as no troops could be sent to the rescue of the British people there, owing to the cutting of the lines, asked General Beynon to send aeroplanes. That night he received from Simla authority to establish martial law within the districts of Amritsar and Lahore, "during the existence of open rebellion against authority of Government, and also to direct immediate trial by court-martial of offenders, as in section two of the said Regulation."²

On the 14th of April the Government at Simla, by that time awake to the situation, issued

¹ The statements of the Punjab Government and of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, submitted in evidence to the Disorders Inquiry Committee, but undisclosed to Parliament and the public, contained most of the facts here narrated.

² Bengal State Offences Regulation, 1804.

an ordinance which began with the following words :—

“Whereas the Governor-General is satisfied that a state of open rebellion against the authority of the Government exists in certain parts of the Provinces of the Punjab.”

It declared martial law in the districts of Lahore and Amritsar from midnight between the 15th and 16th April, suspended the functions of the ordinary Courts over State offences, and established a special Commission to try such cases. On the 16th the ordinance was extended to Gujranwala.

Such grave measures came none too soon. There were riots in Calcutta and Bombay, and in many parts of India preparations were made either to withdraw European women and children to the Hills or to place them within fortified lines. On the 10th of April the Secretary of the Satyagraha Sabha published the false news that Gandhi had been “arrested.” Ahmedabad, the centre of his power in the Bombay Presidency, rose in rebellion, and in the confused and bloody fighting which lasted from the 10th to the 12th, it is commonly believed that at least as many were killed as at Amritsar.¹

With these flashes, the storm subsided and passed, and the strong wind before which it was driven was the news of the Jallianwala Bagh. The report of that affair spread with an extraordinary rapidity. Thus at one point on the railway line a mob about

¹ According to the Disorders Inquiry Committee, “among the (Ahmedabad) rioters twenty-eight are known to have been killed and 123 wounded. It is probable that there were more, but the others have not been traced.”

to loot a railway train which they had derailed were stopped by the approach of another railway train from the direction of Amritsar with shouts from the Indian passengers, " Beware, the Sahibs are shooting," at which words the rebels suddenly went, and the British on the train which had been stopped were left marvelling at their escape. In the Punjab not a shot had to be fired after the 16th April, and the news spread to other provinces. In the city of Allahabad, some hundreds of miles away, the British—such was the temper of the people—had been preparing to evacuate the civil lines when they noticed a wonderful change of demeanour, and a little later themselves heard the news of Amritsar. In other parts of the United Provinces, and farther afield, in Patna, Behar, and Orissa, and in the Central Provinces, this same extraordinary change was observed, as if a cloud of menace suddenly passed from the face of India, and still farther away, beyond the Pamirs, on the roof of Asia, the news reverberated. British officers who were opposing the Bolsheviks (as far as they were allowed by their Government) round Merv and Meshed, noted the effect of the news. Captain Blacker of the Guides, then fighting in those regions, observed its results on the budding alliance between the Amir Amanullah and the Commissars: " The Soviet-Afghan defeat in the Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar, on the Khyber line, had rather disgusted our sporting cousins of Kabul and Kandahar. During late 1919 and early 1920 they mistrusted the Reds, their late allies, and even threatened to attack them at Merv and on the Pamirs, where a

Red detachment had mobilised for an inroad into India." ¹

Such episodes, of which it would be easy to give many, support the considered opinion of Sir Michael O'Dwyer : " Speaking with perhaps a more intimate knowledge of the then situation than any one else, I have no hesitation in saying that General Dyer's action that day was the decisive factor in crushing the rebellion, the seriousness of which is only now being realised." ²

" Minds of a very low order are ruled by fear alone." So Sir Charles Hanbury-Williams wrote to Catherine the Great. The mobs, used by the conspirators, were certainly of a very low order, the roughs and hooligans of the great cities of India, as we may judge by their actions and the incitements used to provoke them. We have seen the lootings and murders of Amritsar. At Ahmedabad the first victim, a British police sergeant, had his hands cut off and was then hacked to pieces. A loyal native official who defended his office was tied to a chair and cremated alive on a pile of his own records. The appeals which reached the heart of such mobs were not to civil or political liberties, but to such passions as cruelty, cupidity, and lust. Placards posted on the walls of at least one city in Northern India informed the crowd that there were European women in the civil lines to be ravished.³ Such elements as these could only be controlled by fear, but

¹ Captain L. V. S. Blacker, ' On Secret Patrol in High Asia ' (1922), p. 275.

² Sir Michael O'Dwyer's written statement to the Disorders Inquiry Committee.

³ Statement of Punjab Government (Lyallpur District).

it was not fear which moved the common people of the towns and villages of Northern India to fall away from the conspiracy. They had been told that the British dared no longer to rule, and that the Raj had fallen, and they saw such great cities as Delhi, Lahore, Amritsar, Ahmedabad in the hands of the mob. General Dyer's action disproved these claims, and restored respect for authority.

Neither Sir Michael O'Dwyer nor General Beynon, nor, indeed, any other European, was at once aware of this deliverance, for although the people fell away, there remained gangs of the more deeply involved who continued the outrages and worked desperately to retain their waning influence. The European women and children continued in the comfortless and insanitary shelter of old forts in the Plains, or, as in the case of those in Lahore, were sent to the shelter of the Hills.¹

On the 16th of April Sir Michael O'Dwyer rode round the outside of his capital, and noted that the martial law proclamations had been torn down and seditious placards put in their place. Yet in the city itself some of the shops were open and the *ghari-wallas* were again plying for hire. Although a general strike was being attempted, the railways were working, and although the villagers had joined in the looting, there were reassuring reports that neither they nor the demobilised men of the Indian Army were really in the rebellion. Moreover, the Indian troops remained staunch, despite all attempts to seduce them.

¹ The European women and children of Lahore were transferred to the Hill stations on the 17th of April.

That day General Dyer came in from Amritsar and gave Sir Michael O'Dwyer a faithful report of what had happened, and asked leave to lead movable columns through the district, a measure on which the Lieutenant-Governor and General Beynon had already determined.

It was possible now to spare more troops from the defence of civil lines. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, indeed, would have liked civil authority to control the martial law administration, as had been done in the Mutiny of 1857, and a few weeks later was allowed in the North-West Frontier Province ; but the Government of India, anxious to avoid responsibility, insisted that martial law be administered by the soldier. And thus it happened that a war-time officer, Colonel Frank Johnson, known in Lahore from his proclamations as 'Whereas,' humorously threatened to arrest the Lieutenant-Governor if His Honour dared to endanger his valuable life by setting foot within the city.¹

As for Amritsar, there was no trouble in that city after the 13th of April. That very night the merchants and shopkeepers went to the city inspector and begged to be allowed to reopen business. General Dyer convened a meeting of these people, and the shops were open and in full swing next morning. The curfew was relaxed, the water supply restored, and Amritsar resumed its normal life. The prevailing

¹ Those who desire to know more of the redoubtable Frank Johnson may be referred to my 'Life of Jameson.' It was the same Frank Johnson who contracted with Cecil Rhodes to take the Pioneers to Mashonaland in 1890, and to run a coach service between Beira and Salisbury thereafter. In order to explore that route he and Dr Jameson made a perilous voyage down the Pungwe to the Indian Ocean (*ibid.*, vol. i., ch. xii.).

sentiment of gratitude at being delivered from the tyranny of a mob was expressed by the *Raises* and *Chowdries* and citizens, who came to General Dyer all together soon after the 13th, thanked him for his action, and said that his firmness had saved Amritsar and other cities of the Punjab from a general plunder. The General was then at the Circuit House (on the far side of the civil lines), to which, by permission, he had moved his headquarters. It is surrounded by a compound, large even for India, and yet insufficient to contain the crowd which clamoured to see the General Sahib and thank him for saving their women-folk and their goods. Captain Briggs tried to satisfy the crowd with messages, but in vain; in the end the General was dragged out and acclaimed the saviour of Amritsar.

On 24th April the Divisional Commander visited Amritsar. General Sir William Beynon, afterwards described by an English Judge as a "man of steel," was, as a matter of fact, an old campaigner, son of another such, who had served in every frontier war since 1887, as experienced in Indian arms as Sir Michael O'Dwyer in Indian administration, a soldier cool, wary, and resolute, without enthusiasms and without illusions. He inspected the camp at the Ram Bagh, and then went with his Brigadier to the city. They visited the Jallianwala Bagh together, and General Beynon, with a soldier's eye, estimated the position. In his view Dyer by taking his tiny force through that narrow lane had walked into a trap. The rest was a psychological question, hung upon the finest of balances. If Dyer had hesitated, if the mob had rushed upon him, he and

his force must have perished like a fly flattened on a wall. General Beynon agreed with his subordinate : in such a nasty situation there was nothing to do, from the tactical point of view, but to hit first and to hit hard. " But what I do not understand," General Beynon added, " is why you shot so many." Then General Dyer explained to him, as he had explained to Sir Michael O'Dwyer on the 16th April, the impression he had that the mob, as it surged towards any means of escape, and surged back again from a cul-de-sac, was gathering for a rush. Again General Beynon understood and approved.

As the work of restoring order proceeded, it became more certain that preparations for what Mr Miles Irving called " the Day " had been disorganised by the events of the 10th April. Thus on the 29th of April the railway stationmaster told Captain Briggs that very large quantities of *lathis* were arriving by rail. On going down to the railway station, the General and his Brigade-Major found one large storehouse full to the roof of *lathis* and many more in trucks. By reference to the railway books it was found that whereas only twelve bundles of 200 sticks each had come in during March and April 1918, no less than 1056 bundles, or 211,200 clubs, had been imported in March and April 1919. These cudgels or quarter-staves, thick, heavy, and readily shod with brass or iron, the characteristic weapon of the Indian peasant, were obviously intended for the arming of the rebel army, the *Dauda Fauj*.¹

As to the administration of martial law in Am-

¹ Disorders Inquiry Committee. Vol. iii.—Statement of Captain Briggs.

ritsar, we have the report of Major S. R. Shirley, Area Officer and Provost Marshal for the District. It shows that as the riots occurred previous to the 19th April when martial law was locally proclaimed, no cases, however trivial, could be tried or otherwise handled by the military authorities. Moreover, the number of cases and of punishments was less than in the other centres of rebellion. And this was largely due to the sagacious policy of General Dyer, for as the agitation had been partly engineered in the local bar-room, he thought it both just and politic to use the pleaders and barristers of Amritsar to restore the peace, and organised them as Special Constables, who were given the assistance of military control, were held responsible for law and order, and had to report to the General twice daily at the Ram Bagh. He testifies that with few exceptions they did their work very well indeed, and that the city was soon a pattern of good behaviour. The number of floggings was twenty-five, "which," says Major Shirley, "would appear an exceedingly small number when it is remembered that the city and district were full of professional roughs, many of whom had been imported by agitators for the purpose of riots, or had come to Amritsar for the sake of violence and loot." Major Shirley adds that "no public whipping took place whatever." "Six men," indeed, "were whipped in the street where Miss Sherwood was assaulted; but the whipping was not public, the street being closed by military pickets and the public excluded. The six men in question were those implicated in the assault on this lady. They were brought before me in my capacity of Provost Marshal

and Military Magistrate for gross insubordination and offering violence while in military custody on a date subsequent to 19th April 1919, and were sentenced by me to be whipped under powers conferred on me by law.”¹

On Sunday, the 20th April, all available Englishmen by special warning attended church parade, and General Dyer addressed them on the duty of their race in the situation in which they found themselves. He particularly warned the troops against reprisals, and pointed out that justice was in the hands of authority. “The impression of the solemnity of the speech,” says an officer who was present, “remains with me after all these years. Although the troops had been very much incensed, particularly by the attack on Miss Sherwood, no case came to my notice of any one either exceeding his duties or ill-treating Indians.”

This brings us to a matter for which General Dyer was more directly responsible, the notorious ‘Crawling Order.’ There is evidence that the assault on Miss Sherwood had infuriated the British troops in Amritsar to such an extent that General Dyer, for the sake of discipline, warned them against any attempt at reprisals on that account.² General Dyer himself, who had a very tender reverence for women,

¹ Disorders Inquiry Committee. Report on the operation of martial law in Amritsar area. ‘Evidence,’ vol. iii. p. 206. The cane has always been a recognised punishment in India, partly because the Indian gaol holds no terrors for the Indian *badmash*. In the case of the rebellion the gaol accommodation was, in any case, so inadequate that other punishments had to be substituted if many of the prisoners were to be punished at all.

² Deputy-Commissioner’s letter, dated 4th August 1919, cited in the Statement of Punjab Government.

saw Miss Sherwood lying on a pallet in the Fort, swathed in bandages, between life and death. On that same day, the 19th April, under his powers of martial law, he closed to public traffic the little lane, one hundred and fifty yards long, called the Kucha Tawarian, in which Miss Sherwood had been beaten. Placing a picket at either end, he told a sergeant that any who wanted to go down that street must go on their hands and knees. It chanced shortly afterwards that a body of prisoners passed that way, and the picket, taking the remark literally, made them crawl from one end of the street to the other. The matter was brought to the General's attention, but as he had given the order he stood by it, with the proviso that it did not apply to women. General Dyer afterwards explained that as "we look upon women as sacred, or ought to," he had searched his mind for a punishment to fit the crime, and as Indian devotees went on all fours to places they held sacred, he thought that procedure appropriate.¹

The order was enforced between 6 A.M. and 8 P.M. from the 19th to the 24th April, and during that time no less than fifty people solicitously obeyed the orders of the British sergeant who stood at the corner. One man, he said, "actually crawled through three times, and had to be stopped by the picket from giving further exhibitions," although whether his design was to propitiate the Government or to provide matter for propaganda does not appear. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who did not approve of such "fancy punishments," asked the martial law authorities to put an end to it as soon as it came to his ears.

¹ Disorders Inquiry Committee. General Dyer's evidence, vol. iii. p. 120.

There is a matter of more consequence to which we may now turn—the part played by the Sikhs in these troubles. Underlying the disorders was a struggle, unseen yet intense, between the conspirators and General Dyer for the allegiance of that warlike sect. The fear of those who knew them best was not that they should join the rabble of the city, but that, misled by false rumours, they should rise on their own account, loot the city, establish their own rule of the Sikh sword, and thus come in conflict with the British Government.¹

The rebels made cunning appeal to the sentiments of these people. Thus a rumour was widely circulated that a number of Sikh girls and women had been assaulted by soldiers at the Amritsar railway station. The actual facts were that a party of Sikh girls, travelling under the escort of three of their men, were armed with the Sikh *kirpan* or dagger; arms being forbidden, the girls' escort reported to

¹ "We know them to be hot-headed men, who, if they thought that the Government was failing, would step in for anything they could get."—Evidence of Mr Miles Irving. (Disorders Inquiry Committee, vol. iii. p. 7.)

Also the following passage in the evidence of Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Smith, I.M.S. (*Ibid.*, p. 55.)

- Q. You said that the whole of the Punjab villages would have gone into revolution . . . not . . . against Government, but for the purpose of looting . . . ?
- A. If I had gone out to one of the villages on the 10th of April and brought a quantity of rum with me and offered it to a lot of stalwart Sikh villagers, and told them, "Come along with me and loot Amritsar," I could have looted Amritsar.
- Q. They are always ready for a loot ?
- A. They like a fight and they like a loot.
- Q. I want to understand what you want to suggest about the Sikhs that you saw ?
- A. I suggested nothing except that their general facial expression was that of a man who was ready for any romantic adventure.

the authorities. While the point was being settled the party was detained, but it was not searched; the girls were allowed to keep their *kirpans*, were sent on by the next train, and made no complaint.¹

On the morning of the 14th April General Dyer was told by his friend, Mr Donald, the Deputy Inspector-General of Police, that there were plans for another meeting to be held round the Golden Temple. "It was evidently thought," as General Dyer afterwards explained, "that I should again open fire on the meeting, and that some of the bullets would have hit the Golden Temple, whereupon the whole Sikh community would have been up in arms as one man." To avert this danger, General Dyer sent the following letter to Sardar Arur Singh, the manager of the Golden Temple :—

"The General Officer Commanding has heard that it is intended to hold a meeting in the Golden Temple. You are no doubt aware that such a meeting of the citizens of Amritsar would be contrary to all the Sikh usages. You should therefore come and see the General immediately on receipt of this order, realising that the troops will all be used to protect your Golden Temple from any kind of indignity or harm."²

He sent a similar invitation to Sardar Sundar Singh Majithia, the head Sikh of the Amritsar District.

The ensuing conversation between these three gentlemen of kindred spirit though diverse race brought frank and cordial understanding. "They

¹ Statement of the Punjab Government.

² The letter is signed by Captain Briggs as Brigade-Major and dated 12 noon, the 14th April 1919.

both agreed to help me and to deny the many false rumours that were prevalent. Owing to their influence the meeting was not held around the Golden Temple." The Sikh leaders, moreover, cleared their people of any complicity in the plot. "After 13th April," says General Dyer, "one saw that the Sikhs were not in the mutiny to any extent, and that it was my duty to keep them out of it." To that end General Dyer paid the visit of which we have already heard to Sir Michael O'Dwyer, and laid before the Lieutenant-Governor his plan of going round the District with small movable columns. The objects he set out were four :—

1. To show that the Sarkar was still strong and had soldiers and guns.
2. To assure the Sikhs that all they had heard about the bombing of the Golden Temple, raping of Sikh girls, &c., was false, and that they must not be led into disorder by those who were doing all they could do to get them into it—to use them as scapegoats.
3. To talk straightly and to the point to the population.
4. To be certain of having the Sikhs on our side in case of Muhammadan trouble arising from the Turkish Peace Terms.¹

On the 21st of April General Dyer set out with a movable column of 100 British, 100 Indian infantry, 20 Indian cavalry, and 2 armoured cars to Gurdaspur. There he was told by Mr Harcourt and Mr Glascock, the Magistrate and police officer, that the situation had been "very threatening," both there and at Dhariwal and Bheala, but since the 13th was

¹ Written statement of General Dyer, Disorders Inquiry Committee, vol. iii. p. 204.

“very much more satisfactory.” The General “spoke very plainly” to the local notables with “very good effect.” Then on the 24th with another column to the China Bugga-Atari area, taking in his train a Sikh priest, the Mahant Siri Kirpa Singh of Guru Sat Sultani, of great influence, of whom he had made a friend; on the 25th, he went to Ashrapur, where two Mission hospital ladies had been rescued on the night of the 12th; on the 28th he visited Sur Singh, a “particularly disaffected village,” and addressed a Durbar of village headmen. In these pacifying pilgrimages his gift of frank and humorous speech served him in good stead, and he had besides surrounded himself with Sikh officers, old friends of his own. An English officer, who was with the column, tells me what a moving sight it was—these old Sikh officers, in uniforms of bygone days, coming out of the villages to pay their respects to the General. “With the help of the Indian officers whom they knew, and seeing their high priest with the column, the villagers soon began to realise that they were being used or were meant to be used as tools in the hands of the enemies of the Crown.” The General, by the way, should have known better than to contravene the policy of the Secretary of State—“in deliberately disturbing the placid pathetic contentment we are acting for their highest good.”

Thus General Dyer earned not the confidence only but the love and gratitude of the Sikhs. When he returned to Amritsar, he and his Brigade-Major, Captain Briggs, were summoned to the Golden Temple, and found themselves in the presence of the chief priests and leaders of the sect.

"Sahib," they said, "you must become a Sikh even as Nikalseyn Sahib¹ became a Sikh."

The General thanked them for the honour, but he objected that he could not as a British officer let his hair grow long.

Arur Singh laughed. "We will let you off the long hair," he said.

General Dyer offered another objection, "But I cannot give up smoking."

"That you must do," said Arur Singh.

"No," said the General, "I am very sorry, but I cannot give up smoking."

The priest conceded, "We will let you give it up gradually."

"That I promise you," said the General, "at the rate of one cigarette a year."

The Sikhs, chuckling, proceeded with the initiation. General Dyer and Captain Briggs were invested with the five *kakas*, the sacred emblems of that war-like brotherhood, and so became Sikhs. Moreover, a shrine was built to General Dyer at their holy place, Guru Sat Sultani, and when a few days afterwards came the news that the Afghans were making war upon India, the Sikh leaders offered the General ten thousand men to fight for the British Raj if only he would consent to command them. General Dyer reported this offer, but it was refused, and a magnificent impulse of loyalty was allowed to fade away.

¹ General Nicholson of Mutiny fame.

CHAPTER XIX.

THIRD AFGHAN WAR.

THE OLD AMIR AND THE NEW—AMANULLAH'S CONSPIRACY—
DANGER AT PESHAWAR—A GREAT CAMPAIGN—A DANGEROUS
SALIENT—THE RELIEF OF THAL.

WHAT gave British India most anxiety during these troubles was the menace from Afghanistan. On the 20th February 1919 the Amir Habibullah was murdered while he lay asleep in his tent in the Laghman Valley. He had long followed a policy of friendship with the British Government, and had, as we have seen, resisted the blandishments of Germany and Turkey. A few weeks before his death he had entered into an alliance with the Emir of Bokhara and several other Central Asian Princes to oppose the Moscow Soviet in that part of the world. The murder was therefore regarded in India as a blow at Great Britain.

This view was confirmed by the events which followed. The Amir's brother, Sardar Nasrullah Khan, headed a party which had aimed at entering the war on the side of Turkey, and he was known, besides, to hate the English. He had himself precipitately proclaimed Amir at Jalalabad. Habi-

ullah's eldest son, Inayat Ulla Khan, waived his claims in favour of his uncle ; but Amanullah, the third son, then at the capital, acted with more spirit. He assumed the throne, seized the Government, and received such support from the notables that Nasrullah was forced to make submission. Colonel Ali Raza was executed for a regicide of which he was generally supposed to be innocent, and Nasrullah Khan was imprisoned for life on conviction of complicity.

The new Amir belonged to a faction no less anti-British than his uncle. His father-in-law, Mohammed Tarzi, editor of the only paper in the country, was suspect of complicity both with the Germans and the Bolsheviks, and was violent and bitter in the agitation against England in India. The friends of Amanullah, as he was still unstable on his throne, no doubt thought it wise to join the popular cry in the defence of Turkey against the severity of the Treaty of Sévres, and to divert the people from the murder of a beloved ruler to an attack on the hated infidel. It was thought also, and seems likely, that the Bolsheviks had aided the revolution for their own ends, and that one of these ends was an attack on India.

Whatever the reason, the new Government was hostile to Great Britain, a fact well understood on the British side of the frontier. In Lahore, as already mentioned, the rebels raised the cry that they looked to the Amir for protection, and General Dyer afterwards stated that at Amritsar he had to consider the danger from Afghanistan. There was also in the mind of Sir Michael O'Dwyer at

Lahore, and of the Government of India at Simla, a strong suspicion that the events in Afghanistan and the events in India were somehow related. Mr J. P. Thompson, Chief Secretary to the Government of the Punjab, afterwards described what was known of both sides as two cantilevers which did not quite meet in the middle. Possibly there was a central span unknown to either which united both.

It is certain that by the 14th April the new Amir had determined to make war on India, for on that date Saif-Ur-Rahman, one of the Silk Letter conspirators at Kabul, wrote to Abdul Khair of Delhi asking for letters and prayers in favour of Afghanistan. It is certain also that the agitation of the Khilafat and Satyagraha movements were then working up both to a union and a climax. Gandhi, the Hindu, had met Abdul Bari, the Muhammadan, at Lucknow in March, and had there discussed a joint programme of civil disobedience and *jehad*. The Satyagrahas proposed to bring *hartals* to a height in April and May; the Muhammadan conspirators had arranged to proclaim a *jehad* at a great meeting in Bombay on the 23rd of April. These convergences suggest something more than a coincidence. If, however, a concert had been arranged between the Afghans and the Indian conspirators, it was thrown into discord by the premature outbreaks of Delhi, Lahore, and Amritsar. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, by his arrests and deportations, upset the time-table, if time-table there was. The Amir, it seems likely, had fixed his invasion for the 15th of May or thereabouts; the Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province warned the Punjab Government

that that date had been originally settled both for the Afghan invasion and the rising in India; but the plans of the Afghans like the plans of the Indian conspirators seem to have been precipitated either by events or by the lack of self-control. Towards the end of April, Saleh Muhammad Khan, the Afghan Commander-in-Chief, arrived at Dakka with a strong escort and two guns on the pretext of inspecting the Afghan frontier. On the 2nd of May some coolies at work on the Khyber water-works were murdered by order from Kabul; that same night British soil was occupied by Afghan troops. The British Government protested, and received a hostile reply from the Amir. On the 4th of May Amanullah gave his subjects a grotesque description of the Rowlatt Act: "Nobody . . . Hindu or Muhammadan, will have any right to own either his land or his property or power to speak; nor any more than three men stand together in one place; nor may they go to their mosques or Hindus to their temples." On the 7th of May the Afghan postmaster at Peshawar disclosed the plot to an informer in British employment: it was for simultaneous attacks on the Khaibar, the Kurram, and Quetta, supported by a rising in India. Messages had been sent to the Indian agitators to act as soon as the fighting began.

Sir George Roos-Keppel, then Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province, took a decisive step upon this information. The very next day—that is to say, on the 8th of May—he surrounded the native city with a cordon of British troops and captured the local plotters, including the Afghan postmaster and his staff. In the postmaster's house

was found a lakh of rupees, a large part of it in silver, to be used to buy support, and a quantity of leaflets and proclamations.¹ One of these gave a false account of events at Amritsar, representing the Sikhs as refusing to fire on the rioters and firing on the British, and a letter which the Afghan postmaster had written to the Amir the day before assured Amanullah that the Sikh regiments had promised to regard Moslems as brethren and not to fire on them. There was, besides, a letter from the Amir's father-in-law, Muhammad Tarzi, by then Foreign Minister for Afghanistan, asking the envoy at Simla to obtain the allegiance both of Hindus and Muhammadans. "Afghanistan," the letter continued, "shares the feelings of the Indians, and is determined to support them. . . . If we get a chance, please get exciting articles inserted in the newspapers. . . . It is essential that Ghulam Haidar and other Kardars should win over hearts of Hindus and Mussulmans, and induce them to unite with the Mussulmans."

Sir George Roos-Keppel acted just in time. "I drew it rather fine with Peshawar city," he afterwards wrote to his friend Sir Michael O'Dwyer. "We had the cordon round at 2.30, and we now have clear proof that the rising to burn cantonments, cut the wireless, open the jail, &c., was for that night. . . . What a blessing you got the Punjab in hand before this show started." ²

¹ On the 4th of May the Afghan postmaster arrived in Peshawar from Jalalabad with a motor-car load of leaflets printed at Kabul, announcing that the Germans had resumed war, and that India and Egypt had risen.—Commander-in-Chief's Despatch, Afghan Campaign, 1919.

² Shown to the author by Sir Michael O'Dwyer.

It was discovered further that the rebels of Amritsar had sent an envoy to the Hindus of Peshawar, who in their turn had sent messages to other conspirators across the frontier, in Tirah, Swat, Mohmand, and Bajaur, urging a general insurrection. There was even a "provisional Government of India," which had issued a proclamation concerning a compact with the Afghans.

"Your real interests," it said, "would be destroyed by fighting against invaders. . . . Rather use every possible means to kill British, continue to tear up railways and cut down the telegraphs, to refuse to help the British with men and money, and supply the armies of invaders with provisions. Thus shall you earn peace at their hands and *sanads* of honour."

War was thus forced upon a reluctant British Government, ill-prepared to undertake it at that time and place. Since 1914 India had been used as an arsenal for campaigns overseas; her forces disorganised and overstrained; her war-like stores and railway plant reduced to the lowest point; her field army turned into a collection of supply depots for reinforcements abroad; her administration weakened by the withdrawal of civilians for military duty; her returned troops either demobilised or in no condition for active service. On the other hand, such forces as remained intact had the experience of the war behind them. New weapons and methods unknown to Afghanistan had been invented by the mechanical mind of Europe; and the British troops from Mesopotamia, war-worn and wasted as they were, still awaited transport to

England, and could be diverted to the frontier. It was putting upon them an inhuman strain; but the stuff of British loyalty held, and the Indian troops also, their furlough lost to them, turned their faces towards the enemy "in a spirit of cheerful resignation."

For political reasons the British Government so severely censored the news that the British public never realised either the extent or the heroism of this new struggle. At one time the forces maintained across the Indus amounted to no less than 340,000 men and 158,000 animals. To supply this great force the cantonments of Northern India were stripped to the last man. After the 8th of May there were only eight British soldiers left in Lahore, but they were enough. Most of the conspirators were by that time in prison, and those who had denounced Sir Michael O'Dwyer as another Nadir Shah were by that time anxiously looking to the Government to protect them against the horrors of an Afghan invasion.¹

These numbers, great as they were, barely sufficed for the work in hand. The Afghan frontier stretches from Chitral on the north-east for a thousand miles to Seistan on the south-west, and beyond the three hundred miles of road between Robat and Ruikhaf

¹ The farewell addresses to Sir Michael O'Dwyer on the 12th of May were presented by the leaders of all communities, including some who had been foremost in the agitation the month before. The Muhammadans denounced the "organised conspiracy" and congratulated the Government on "using the speedy and effective methods of martial law"; the Sikhs spoke of His Honour's "firm grasp" as having "nipped the evil in the bud"; and the Hindus, after speaking of their "great anxiety and concern as to the frontier," added, "We have full confidence in the strength of British arms."

had to be guarded against raids from Herat. Along that long frontier line lies a great belt of wild hill country, sloping up through the mountains of the Hindu Kush to the Pamirs, and shading off to the deserts of Baluchistan and Eastern Persia. The border country from Chitral to Baluchistan gave the British command more cause for anxiety than the Afghan Army. "The Pathan," says the military text-book on the subject, "is bloodthirsty, cruel, and vindictive to the highest degree; he does not know what truth or faith is." But it adds that he is an infallible umpire in the game of war, and never allows a tactical mistake to go unpunished. "It must be remembered," said Sir William Lockhart in a memorandum to his troops campaigning in Tirah, "that the forces are opposed to perhaps the best skirmishers and best natural rifle shots in the world; and that the country they inhabit is probably the most difficult on the face of the globe." In the course of many campaigns we had penetrated that country in all directions and planted outposts garrisoned chiefly with tribal militia, and to guard those valleys which lead down into the Plains we had built stronger forts more strongly held. But as these tribal garrisons could not be relied upon to resist the excitement of a *jehad* and the prospects of loot, and as the forts were few and ill-supplied with men and munitions, the line remained insecure. The tribes could muster an aggregate of some 120,000 fighting men, armed with modern rifles, many of which were provided from Kabul and many stolen from British cantonments. It was on raising these dubious allies that the Afghans

based their plans, and both sides knew that neither could count upon their firm allegiance. They would sit upon their mountain summits watching with eagle eye the course of the battle, and could only be trusted to take that side which seemed to promise victory and plunder. As for the Amir's regular armies, they numbered in all 7000 sabres, 42,000 rifles, and 260 guns, at least half of which last were either immobile or obsolete.

The British plan of campaign was for a bold offensive through the Khaibar towards Jalalabad, the object being to divide the tribes and to cut off some of the most formidable from Afghan support, and at the same time to force an Afghan concentration to defend their capital of Kabul, for the British High Command reckoned that if they could bring the Afghans to battle they could defeat them. As for the other passes, such as the Kurram and the Tochi to the south of the Khaibar, they were to be lightly held, and if necessity arose the outposts were to be withdrawn. Events in those regions would conform to success in the main attack.

Our main army, therefore, pushed up the Khaibar Pass with all possible speed. It defeated the covering troops in the neighbourhood of Landi Khana, on the 13th May occupied Dakka, and on the 17th May heavily defeated the Afghan main army, which "for the time being practically ceased to exist as an organised force." The way seemed open to Kabul.

But then came a disturbing development. To the north of the head-waters of the Kurram River the Afghan boundary advances in a great salient, pro-

tected by high mountain ranges, to the post of Shabak, not more than twenty miles across the mountains from the British fort of Thal, and close also to the British posts on the Upper Tochi. In this salient of Khost, Nadir Khan, ex-Commander-in-Chief of the Afghan Army, concentrated a force of about 12,000 men. On the 21st of May word came to the British command that this Afghan army was moving towards the Upper Tochi and in the direction of Wana. It was feared with good reason that the Mahsuds and Wazirs would join with the invader, and that the unsupported Waziristan militias could not be trusted to hold their posts. Orders were therefore given to evacuate the garrison of Tochi, and to destroy such stores as could not be saved. The news of these retirements spread swiftly, and the local Mahsuds and Wazirs streamed down after the retreating column. The Wazir garrisons either deserted or turned upon their officers. Only those faithful bodyguards, the Khat-taks, remained true to their salt and protected their officers from massacre. Moreover, when the news of the evacuation reached Wana, the officer in charge decided to evacuate the posts of Southern Waziristan before the Mahsuds had time to rise. The announcement was made to the Pathan officers on the evening of the 26th, and that night the garrison rose and seized the Keep with its treasure, six hundred thousand rounds of ammunition, and most of the transport. Three hundred men remained loyal, and with these Major Russell and his brother officers began a terrible retreat on Mogal Kot. They were joined *en route* by the loyal remnants of three other

garrisons; Mogal Kot, being no safer than Wana, was likewise abandoned. Five of the British officers were killed and two wounded in the fighting that followed, but Major Russell, himself among the wounded, contrived to bring what was left of his force to safety. These disastrous events roused the Mahsuds and Wazirs of the lower valley, and they laid siege to the posts of the Lower Tochi.

Such were the reverberations of the mere rumour of an Afghan advance; but Nadir Khan had different plans. On the 23rd of May he left his base at Matun, and marched down the Kaitu River towards Spinwam on the road to Thal. Hardly had our garrison evacuated that post when he entered it with a force of 3000 Afghan infantry and a large following of tribesmen. He had, besides, two 10 cm. Krupp field howitzers and seven 7.5 cm. Krupp pack guns, which he had carried on elephant back across the mountains by a road thought to be too difficult for the passage of troops. This move brought him within twenty miles of Thal, the British fort on the Kurram, and a point of great importance to the defence of that part of the frontier, since it guards the upper end of the road and railway to Kohat, which in its turn guards the road and railway across the Indus to Rawalpindi, and lies, besides, across that great lateral line of communication which runs from Peshawar to Bannu.

Brigadier-General Eustace, who commanded the Kohat area, reacted to the threat by strengthening the garrison of Thal at the expense of the garrison of Kohat. Not only so: he had, besides, on rumours of the advance, sent a force to strengthen our outpost

at Parachinar, which lies farther up the Kurram Valley and close to the Afghan border. General Eustace himself took command at Thal of a force of about two thousand rifles and four mountain guns. On the 26th of May his Sappers and Miners worked the whole day strengthening the fort and making inner and outer lines. At nine o'clock on the 27th the enemy—three thousand Afghans, with a following of about nine thousand tribesmen—appeared, and the siege of Thal was begun.

The fortress is well placed about one hundred feet above and to the west of the Kurram River on a mile-broad plateau between two *nalas* or ravines, but was not designed against modern artillery. On the farther side of the Ishkhalai Nala, which forms the southern border of the plateau, are the Wazir Hills, steeply rising two or three thousand feet; to the north-west, beyond the Sangroba Nala, is the bold peak of Khadimakh, rising two thousand three hundred feet; and on the other side of the Kurram is Khapianga, eight hundred feet above the river. At various points on these hills Nadir Khan placed his artillery so as at once to outrange and bombard the fort; the hills, besides, were occupied by his infantry and the tribesmen.

The Afghans and Pathans together numbered at least nine thousand men, and the course of the siege was closely watched by the Orakzais, some twenty thousand strong, who proposed to take the side that won. General Eustace's force was young and untrained, and being outnumbered and outgunned, he kept within his defences. He had two aeroplanes

of the Royal Air Force, which bombed the enemy gun emplacements and gave him some temporary relief from a bombardment to which he could not otherwise reply ; but, nevertheless, as the Afghans drew their howitzers closer their fire became more searching. On the 28th of May the petrol dump, the stacks of fodder outside the fort, and the rations in the railway station yard were set on fire, and the wireless station put out of action for a time. That night a party of Frontier Constabulary, which held a post on the right bank of the Sangroba Nala, deserted, and the pumping station over the nala which supplied the garrison with water was thus exposed to the enemy. General Eustace ordered pits to be dug and lined with tarpaulin for the storage of water, put both men and animals on half rations, and made communication trenches to shelter his garrison from the galling fire ; but although he easily defeated a half-hearted attack by the Afghan troops, his position was increasingly uncomfortable. He might have resisted a more determined assault ; he could not have stood a much longer siege.

In the meantime this diversion was having very much wider effects. The British High Command saw clearly the implication of an advance which, as the Commander-in-Chief afterwards stated, " might have compromised our plan of campaign." If Nadir Khan should succeed in taking Thal, the Orakzais and Afridis would probably join him and threaten the main operations on the Khaibar. The way, besides, would be open to Kohat, which had been divested of its forces by General Eustace. Beyond,

the open plains of India invited the invader. The whole aspect of the campaign was, in fact, changed, and at a stroke.

General Beynon's 16th Division had just been ordered from Lahore to take part in the advance on Kabul. General Dyer's Brigade from Jullundur was among the first of the Division to arrive. Sir Arthur Barrett, in chief command at Peshawar, decided at once to make use of these reinforcements. He telegraphed to General Beynon to go to Kohat, and he asked General Dyer to relieve Thal.

At that interview, which took place at Peshawar on the 28th May,¹ General Barrett said, "I want you to relieve Thal," and added, "I know you will do all that any man can do." General Dyer replied that he would do his best; and then as he was by that time aware that "the influences which had inspired the rebellion were starting an agitation against those who had suppressed it," he opened his mind to his superior officer. "That's all right," Sir Arthur Barrett said. "You would have heard about it long before this if your action had not been approved."

Thus once more, as for the Sarhad, General Dyer had a special commission. He could take what he wanted, and for his transport sent forward sixty-two lorries from Peshawar to Kohat. At Kohat he took four of the six fifteen-pounders of the Frontier Garrison Artillery from the fort, and as these guns had no horses, he used seven of his motor lorries

¹ General Dyer's statement to Army Council, 3rd of July 1920, p. 22. General Beynon received his orders to go to Kohat instead of Peshawar at midnight on the 29th.

both to drag the guns and to carry the ammunition and gunners. Remembering his experiences in the Sarhad of the military value of bluff, he rigged up some of the other lorries with trunks of trees to look like guns, and had, besides, trailing branches attached to them to raise a cloud of dust. By the 29th of May this formidable artillery train was on the road to Thal.

In the meantime a mobile column was being formed at Hangu, twenty-six miles along that road. Leaving directions that the units of his brigade should be sent on by train as they arrived to Togh, eight miles beyond Hangu, General Dyer set off for Hangu by car, and ordered the troops there to march to Togh that night. They set out at 5.30, and the rear-guard had got to the new camp by one o'clock on the morning of the 30th. That day also his brigade arrived, and was made part of the mobile column. The 'Thal Relief Force' was thus composed :—

H.Q. 45th Infantry Brigade.

1 squadron, 37th Lancers.

89th Battery, R.F.A.

Four 15-pounders, Frontier Garrison Artillery.

1 section, No. 23 Mountain Battery.

$\frac{1}{2}$ section, No. 57 Co., 1st Sappers and Miners.

1 section Pack Wireless.

1 armoured motor battery.

1/25th London Regiment.

2/41st Dogras.

1/69th Punjabis.

3/150th Infantry.

250 rifles, 57th Rifles, F.F.

1 company, 2/4th Border Regiment.

Taken together, the strength of the infantry was about 2000 men.

At Togh the General addressed his troops, exhorting them to make a great effort to rescue their comrades at Thal. His words touched the hearts of that strangely assorted force of veterans and war levies, Punjabi peasants, and London men of business, so that they marched to the last of their strength, and some of them dropped in their tracks. At four o'clock on the morning of the 31st May they set out along a fairly open valley between steep hills. There was no wind and but little water, and as the day advanced the stony hillsides became a furnace, the naked rocks throwing back the sun so that it seemed to strike from the ground as from the sky. That year the heat, in those regions of heat, was "six or seven degrees above the normal." I find it stated in the diary kept by the Brigade-Major that a fortnight later (on the 13th of June) the thermometer recorded 120 degrees in the shade. This reading, no doubt, closely corresponds to the temperature on that terrible 31st of May. "Men," says one who went through it, "collapsed at every halt, and were left to be picked up by the ambulance." Alladad Khan, the General's Pathan bearer, pressed a constant succession of wet towels round the General's head, and so, marching most of the time with his men and then pushing ahead with the advance-guard in his car, he contrived to reach camp at Darsamand, a distance of eighteen miles from Togh, and reconnoitred the position before the column arrived. The whole force was there encamped by four o'clock in the afternoon.

When it came into camp General Dyer was lying exhausted under the shade of his car, and his Staff Captain went up to one of the London officers to see if they could spare any water. There was but little left to give, and most of the men by that time could hardly speak, so swollen were their tongues and lips. "The troops marched excellently," says the diary of Captain Briggs, and, if it is not invidious to particularise, we might pause here to admire the spirit of the Londons, which had had no real rest since it entrained at Peshawar at 2 A.M. on the 28th. It was a battalion of 1st Line Territorials, in far-off pre-war days, 'Cyclists,' composed of London clerks and business men. They had arrived in India in February 1916, had gone through Waziristan in 1917, had suffered so much from dysentery and malaria that they had come down with one man fit, and had been sent to Murree to recuperate. They had hoped to get home when Armistice came, but were found too useful in India. When they were mobilised for the Afghan War on the 6-7th May their strength for field service was 21 officers and 300 other ranks. Such was the battalion which swung into Darsamand "in excellent marching order" on that roasting afternoon of the 31st May.

After a short rest the camp was entrenched and picketed, and the Signallers spoke to Thal from a visual station at Fort Lockhart on the Samana Ridge. At five o'clock in the morning of the 1st June the column set out on the last nine miles to Thal, placing pickets as it went along the low hills to the south of the Ishkhalai Nala. In the meantime General Dyer had been picking up what information he could

get, and reconnoitring the position from the hills on the left. To his good fortune he was met on an aeroplane landing ground two miles from Thal by Major Wyllly, General Eustace's Staff Officer, and had from him a full account of the enemy. The main force of the Afghans with the howitzers was beyond Thal, and on the farther bank of the Kurram River ; but to the right of his approach on the spurs of the Khadimakh were two thousand tribesmen with a few regulars and four guns, and on the Wazir Hills to the south of the Ishkhalai Nala was a strong force of four thousand Khostwals and Wazirs under the command of one Babrak Zadran. It was these last that General Dyer decided to attack first, but to mask his intention he ordered his artillery to open fire on the other heights as well.

The heights which he chose to attack had a formidable appearance, but General Dyer realised that Babrak's position was weak in three respects: he had no artillery, his mixed force of Wazirs and Khostwals neither loved nor trusted one another, and his line of retreat was crossed by the Kurram River. General Dyer made his dispositions very rapidly. Orders for such operations can be issued in written form or given verbally. The former method is slow: not only is time required for the preparation of the orders, but it takes time also for them to filter through to the smaller units. General Dyer, therefore, chose to issue his orders verbally, and assembling his commanding officers, gave a series of orders so comprehensive and at the same time so detailed that in ten minutes the whole force knew what it had to do. The Punjabis,

supported by the 3/150th, attacked the hill, while the Londons and the Dogras, the Sappers and Miners and mountain guns made a movement to cover the advance. The attack was made so suddenly and the artillery fire so well directed that Babrak's men, who had gathered the impression that the whole British Army was moving up the valley, were seized with panic, and scattered in headlong flight. By four o'clock the heights were taken by the Punjabis with the loss of only four men wounded. Two hundred men of the 3/150th were left to occupy the position, the remainder of the troops were withdrawn to a camp on the road, and a section of the field battery trotted forward to Thal and silenced the enemy guns on Khapianga.¹

¹ This narrative is partly derived from officers who took part in the operations, notably Colonel Hynes, commanding the 1/25th London Regiment, and from the War Diaries of the 16th Division, the 45th Brigade, and the 1/25th London Regiment at the Historical Section, War Office (by the courtesy of General Sir J. E. Edmonds). I am also heavily indebted in this and the following chapter to the 'Official Account of the Third Afghan War, 1919,' compiled in the General Staff Branch, Army Headquarters, India (Calcutta, 1926). But see the despatch on the campaign by General Sir Charles Monro, Commander-in-Chief in India.

CHAPTER XX.

ARMISTICE.

DYER'S REPLY TO NADIR KHAN—AN ARMISTICE WITHOUT PEACE
—AMANULLAH'S PERFIDY—INGLORIOUS NEGOTIATIONS—CON-
GRATULATIONS AT SIMLA—A BITTER FAREWELL.

GENERAL EUSTACE and his garrison had reason to rejoice at the sight of the relief force, for the howitzer fire of the Afghans had been accurate, and in the short space of six days their casualties amounted to about ninety among the troops and one hundred among the animals. For General Eustace it had been an anxious siege, not only on account of the shortness of the food and danger to the water, but because his lines had a perimeter of nearly five miles, and were vulnerable nearly everywhere.

General Dyer was by no means contented with the relief of Thal; his desire was to defeat the enemy. He at once took over the command of all the troops in the garrison from General Eustace, who returned to Kohat, and next morning launched another attack on the enemy in the positions on the lower slopes of Khadimakh, north-west of Thal, using two battalions of the Thal garrison as well as his own force. While he was advancing, General Dyer had information from the Political Officer attached to his staff that

Nadir Khan had been reinforced by four battalions of regulars and a battery of artillery, which gave him a total of 19,000 infantry and 13 guns. But this accession of strength did not suffice to counter-balance the shattering effect of Babrak's panic-stricken reports. As the attack was developing—I quote from the official account of the war¹—“General Dyer received a letter from Nadir Khan saying that he had been ordered by the Amir to suspend hostilities, and asking for an acknowledgment to this communication. General Dyer, whose knowledge of the Oriental was profound, gave him a characteristic answer: ‘My guns will give an immediate reply, and a further reply will be sent by the Divisional Commander, to whom the letter has been forwarded.’”

Nadir Khan waited neither for the one answer nor the other,² but retreated with all possible speed, while the bombs of the Royal Air Force helped to disperse a body of Zaimukhts who had joined his forces, and the armoured cars and a squadron of Lancers pushed up the left bank of the river to harass his retreat, and the guns of the 89th Battery moved forward to shell his camp at Yusaf Khel. The heat and the pace together were too much for General Dyer's infantry, and he withdrew them to camp, but early next morning he advanced at the head of a column to Yusaf Khel, fording the river

¹ ‘The Third Afghan War,’ official account, p. 61. The story is taken from the Diary of the 45th Brigade, kept by Captain Briggs

² One of General Dyer's spies reported that Nadir Khan, watching through his glasses from the hills the advance of the column along the valley, exclaimed, “My God, we have the whole artillery of India coming against us!”

at Pirkasta, and found the Afghan camp empty and in a state of wild disorder. Two guns and large dumps of cordite and German gun ammunition were among the abandoned stores, and Nadir Khan's tent stood with its carpet, stool, and standard as he had left it. The troops were obliged to leave this booty as they had no means to carry it away, and although General Dyer sent camels to fetch it next morning, by that time the local tribesmen had swooped down upon it like vultures and picked the bones clean.

General Dyer, as he knew that the elephants which carried the Afghan artillery could make only slow progress over the mountains, hoped to overtake the Afghan army, and would have chased Nadir Khan to Matun, but was forbidden for reasons we shall presently consider, and had to content himself with the reflection that he had fulfilled his commission and saved not only General Eustace but Sir Arthur Barrett and the Commander-in-Chief from an awkward predicament.

Sir Charles Monro, in his despatch on the war, bears testimony to these services. "During the advance of General Dyer's column on Thal," says this despatch, "the extreme heat made the long marches exceedingly arduous and exhausting; but the march discipline and spirit of the men were excellent, and the commander and troops deserve great credit for the manner in which the operation was carried out. . . . General Nadir Khan's enterprise was a move which, had it met with a greater measure of success, might have compromised our plan of campaign. The salient of Afghan territory which reaches out between the Tochi and Kurram

Valleys enabled him to concentrate on the flank of two of our main communications through tribal country. An attack on the Kurram undoubtedly promised more important results, for had Nadir Khan succeeded in raising the Orakzai and Afridi tribes against us, the effect would have been felt in our operations in the Khaibar."

Sir Charles Monro confesses that he was regulated by the instructions of the War Committee of the Cabinet received through the Secretary of State for India in 1916—"that operations on the Indian Frontier were to be of a defensive nature, and that, should the offensive be forced upon us, it was to be strictly limited in scope." Sir Charles Monro states further that, on the 15th May, when our victorious armies in the Khaibar were preparing to advance on the capital, "non-official overtures for a cessation of hostilities" were begun, and "culminated on the 31st May in a formal request from the Amir for the conclusion of an armistice," and the despatch proceeds:—

"The Government of India were desirous of avoiding any action which might serve to prejudice negotiations, and I therefore issued orders that, although preparations for an advance on Jalalabad were to be continued without interruption, no further advance was to be made without previous reference to me."

The Amir's request was immediately granted; the armistice was signed on the 3rd of June, and it was this that put an end to the pursuit of Nadir Khan. But it did not put an end either to the dangers or to the hardships of the troops. On the contrary, they were condemned to what Sir Charles

Monro describes as a "period of inaction," which they felt as a "great hardship," since "the success of their efforts had led them to expect an early termination of the war, and they were looking forward eagerly to their long delayed leave or demobilisation." The result was even worse than this, as Sir Charles Monro's narrative makes plain, for, "in spite of the armistice conditions, Afghan officials were everywhere busy endeavouring to incite the tribesmen to rise," and "notwithstanding the Amir's orders to the contrary," regular troops of the Afghan army were attacking our outposts on various parts of the frontier in July. Columns were sniped, convoys ambushed, sections of Frontier Militia incited to mutiny and massacre their officers while these protracted negotiations were proceeding. The misery of Lieutenant-General Wapshare's situation on the Baluchistan section of the frontier is apparent even in the brief statement of the case by the Commander-in-Chief. "Within striking distance of the main force at Chaman, and concentrated within a comparatively small area, lay the bulk of the Afghan Southern Army. Each group of Afghan regulars had its following of armed tribesmen, who, though lacking cohesion and organisation, were fired by the spirit of *jehād*, and threatened to become formidable adversaries under the elation of success. In ordinary circumstances, Lieutenant-General Wapshare's course of action would have been clear—viz., to attack and destroy the force opposed to him; but the political situation precluded him from adopting this obvious solution." General Wapshare, with his hands thus tied behind his back, had to wait in miserable in-

action while, "in spite of the terms of the armistice, the enemy continued to encroach near the British border, and sniping was a daily occurrence." On the 14th of July a convoy of 225 men of the 1st Gurkha Rifles and 75 of the Zhob Militia with a section of mountain guns was attacked by a strong force of Wazirs and Sherannis, overwhelmed and killed almost to a man.

Peace was actually signed on the 8th of August, but the fighting in Waziristan continued, and both the Mahsuds and Wazirs were encouraged in their war by the Afghan Government. In October, Nadir Khan conferred with their leaders at Matun and led the most notable to Kabul, where they were received by the Amir himself, and given special quarters and the most flattering attentions. Amanullah told them only then that he had made peace with the British; he praised them for their attacks on our garrisons, criticised them for not making more of their opportunities, gave them medals and money presents, and specially rewarded those officers and sepoy who had deserted from our militia. It is true that he then advised them to come to an agreement with the British; but General Nadir Khan suggested to them that war would soon be renewed, and they returned to Waziristan to continue the hostilities.

It is difficult to see how negotiations with an enemy can ever be helped by refraining from defeating him. Here, as elsewhere, our politicians forgot that infallible maxim:—

"Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel; but, being in,
Bear't that the opposed may beware of thee."

These inglorious negotiations produced only an inconclusive peace. The enemy boasted that he had never been defeated, and we gained nothing but a long bill of costs and a long list of casualties. As for Nadir Khan, he became Commander-in-Chief and War Minister, and a column was erected at Kabul with a chained lion representing England at the base, to celebrate his feat of arms, which is described as an Afghan victory.¹

And now to return to events in the Kurram. General Beynon, who as we have seen had been given command of the Kohat area, had followed close upon the heels of his Brigadier, and had even overtaken him at his camp beyond Doaba on the 31st of May. He had, however, left General Dyer to conduct his own operations for the relief of Thal, and had returned to Kohat to supervise the enormous influx of troops from Lahore and elsewhere there concentrated by the High Command. On the relief of Thal, General Beynon went up the Kurram Valley to receive the report of the gallant defence of Parachinar by General Fagan and to reorganise the whole position on that part of the frontier. In the meantime, cholera had broken out at Hangu, and the 45th Brigade were infected. General Dyer's battalions, weary with the fatigues and the heats of the campaign to the point of prostration, were sent back to Nowshera.

It may here be said of General Dyer that by that time his health was broken. Strong as it was, his constitution had been undermined by the fevers and suns of that terrible climate. In the very act of dic-

¹ Official account, p. 63.

tating his orders for the decisive attack on the heights above Thal, he had fallen down in an agony of pain, and had only been restored by the aspirin and brandy which, by doctor's orders, his devoted Brigade-Major carried with him as a precaution against such an emergency. He returned to Peshawar, and received the congratulations and thanks of General Barrett, and was given ten days' leave to Dalhousie. On 2nd August he was ordered to Simla to be congratulated by his old fellow-officer of the Queen's, Sir Charles Monro, the Commander-in-Chief. He then returned to Dalhousie to write the report which he had been requested to prepare on Amritsar. He had great difficulty in getting in touch with witnesses, by that time scattered and some on leave or in Europe. His Brigade-Major, whose help he specially desired, he could not reach, Captain Briggs being then in the Kurram Valley; but by the 25th of August 1919 the task was done.¹ This report, written under these disadvantages, in haste, and in ill-health, was to be made the ground of the main attack on General Dyer, an attack less on his action than on the explanation of his motives which it contained. Yet it is fair to say that although Mr Hailey,² a member of the Government which afterwards condemned these motives, asked to see the report—and did see it,—he suggested no changes save that it would be more tactful not to describe the mob as "rebels."

About that time the 45th Brigade was ordered to

¹ General Dyer's Report, dated Dalhousie, 25th August 1919, is printed at the end of vol. iii., Evidence, Disorders Inquiry Committee.

² Afterwards Sir Malcolm Hailey, Governor of the United Provinces.

Chaklala as part of the concentration of troops on the frontier for the Mahsud campaign, which was one of the consequences of the Afghan War. Chaklala lies in the open plain about six miles east of Rawalpindi, and at that time contained nothing in the way of building but one stone hut. As General Dyer had been told by Simla that Chaklala would be his station for some time, his wife and his niece joined him. They lived in a little structure which had been built as an office ; the Brigade itself spent an even more wretched time in tents. A month later the 45th Brigade was ordered to leave for Bannu without General Dyer, who was to take another command. It was a bitter farewell. Captain Briggs in particular clamoured against fate ; and General Dyer, who loved him like a son, bade him farewell almost with tears. They were never to meet again.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HUNTER COMMITTEE.

HOUSE OF COMMONS TACTICS—MR MONTAGU AND GANDHI—SIR
HAVELOCK HUDSON'S BRILLIANT DEFENCE—THE COMPOSITION
OF THE COMMITTEE—AN INACCURATE REPORT—THE SOLDIER
AND THE LAWYERS.

GENERAL DYER was ordered to Peshawar, and as that place was then so packed with troops that there was no room for ladies, his wife and niece returned to Jullundur. The General was given the 5th Brigade, with his headquarters at Jamrud Fort, at the mouth of the Khaibar Pass, a command which suggested to him that he enjoyed the confidence as well as the gratitude of the Commander-in-Chief, and not being a politician he saw no reason to prepare himself against a blow from another quarter.

If in the midst of arduous duties he had had the time to study the proceedings in the House of Commons, he might have been puzzled, but he could hardly have been alarmed. The India Office must have known the facts, for on the 18th of April 1919 it issued a statement on the events of the rebellion, mentioning incidentally that "at Amritsar on 13th April the mob defied the proclamation forbidding public meetings. Firing ensued, and two

hundred casualties occurred." On the other hand, it might have seemed odd that when the Secretary of State was questioned on the subject in the House of Commons on the 16th of April, he mentioned the riots in Bombay but said nothing at all about the Punjab. Then in his speech in Committee of the House on the 22nd of May, Mr Montagu, although he still maintained silence on the Jallianwala Bagh, was reassuring to the soldier. He spoke of the events of April as "rebellion and revolution." He added, "The danger is not past; it exists. It is not something that is finished; it threatens." He deplored the fact that Englishmen "in no way connected with the Government and in no way responsible for the deeds—misdeeds or good deeds of the Government—had lost their lives and had been foully murdered." He regretted that "official Indians and non-official Indians had been done to death," and he added the just observation that "even many of the rioters deserve our sympathy, for when these things occur the man who loses his life as a result of a soldier's bullet is as much the victim of those who prompted the riots as those who were killed by the rioters themselves." After this attribution of blood guiltiness, it must have seemed odd to General Dyer if he read the speech that the Secretary of State proceeded to fawn upon one of the chief fomenters of unrest. Mr Montagu described Gandhi as "a man of the highest motives and the finest character, a man whom his worst enemy, if he has any enemies, would agree is of the most disinterested ambitions that it is possible to conceive, a man who has deserved well of his coun-

try by the services he has rendered both in India and outside it, and yet a man who his friends—and I would count myself as one of them—would wish would exercise his great powers with a greater sense of responsibility, and would realise in time that there are forces beyond his control and outside his influence who use the opportunities offered by his name and reputation.”

The reader may here be reminded that the Satyagraha vow with which Gandhi bound his followers was an oath of “civil disobedience” to such laws as Gandhi’s Committee might veto, and was held to be part of an illegal conspiracy by the law officers of the Punjab Government. It had also been held that the *hartals* which he organised on the eve of the rebellion were intended to bring the Government into contempt, and, in fact, to make all Government impossible. He had been shut out of Delhi as dangerous to the peace of India.¹ This eulogy, therefore, from the mouth of the Secretary of State had some curious implications. But to proceed.

Although Mr Montagu gave this handsome testimonial to the head of Satyagraha, he took the view nevertheless that there was a conspiracy under the rebellion. “Evidence,” he said, “accumulates every day that there is in India a small body of men who are the enemies of the Government, men whom any Government, bureaucratic or democratic, alien or indigenous, if it was worth the name of Government,

¹ “The National Congress began to tamper with the loyalty of the Indian Army in September last year (1920), the Central Khilafat Committee began it earlier, *and I began it earlier still*. Every non-co-operator is pledged to create disaffection towards the Government.”—Gandhi (in ‘Young India’).

must deal with." He referred also to the unprovoked attack upon India by the Amir, prompted, he said, by Bolshevik agents, and promised to exact "stern and just punishment for the raids and invasions perpetrated by unscrupulous forces on the people under our protection." If he did not put two and two together, and connect the war with the rebellion, he at least justified the Rowlatt Act on the ground that it was directed against a secret and formidable conspiracy.

There must, he said casually, be an inquiry into the rebellion and its causes—so much, he hinted, had been proposed by the Government of India ; but his own opinion on that subject robustly appealed to the patriotic instincts of the House of Commons :—

"Let us talk of an inquiry," said Mr Montagu, "when we put the fire out. The only message which we send out from this House to-day to India is a message of confidence in and sympathy with those upon whom the great responsibility has fallen to restore the situation. Then will come the time to hold an inquiry, not only to help us to remove the causes, but in order to dispose, once for all, of some of the libellous charges which have been made against British troops and those upon whom the unpleasant duties in connection with these riots have fallen."

General Dyer could hardly have supposed from these heartening words, as he wiped the sweat of the conflagration from his brow, that the trial of the firemen had only been postponed until after they had put out the fire.

Nor could he have received any other impression from the debate in the Legislative Council of India on the 19th September. In that debate, Sir Henry

Havelock Hudson, who as Adjutant-General of India, represented both the Government and the Commander-in-Chief, gave the Council a full and true account of the events at Amritsar from the 10th to the 13th April, and completely justified General Dyer. "It was clearly," he said, "the duty of the officer in command to disperse this unlawful assembly. Realising the danger to his small force unless he took immediate action, and being well aware of the inadequacy of the measures taken to restore order on the 10th of April, he ordered fire to be opened. . . . From a military point of view the sequence of events justified the exercise of military force, and . . . the object of its exercise was fully attained."

And Sir Havelock Hudson went on to use words which I feel give a lustre to the page in which they are quoted :—

"No more distasteful or responsible duty falls to the lot of the soldier than that which he is sometimes required to discharge in aid of the Civil power. If his measures are too mild, he fails in his duty. If they are deemed to be excessive, he is liable to be attacked as a cold-blooded murderer. His position is one demanding the highest degree of sympathy from all reasonable and right-minded citizens. He is frequently called upon to act on the spur of the moment in grave situations in which he intervenes, because all the other resources of civilisation have failed. His actions are liable to be judged by *ex post facto* standards, and by persons who are in complete ignorance of the realities he had to face. His good faith is liable to be impugned by the very persons connected with the organisation of the disorders which his action has foiled. There are those who will admit that a measure of force may have been necessary, but who cannot agree with the extent of the force employed. How

can they be in a better position to judge of that than the officer on the spot? It must be remembered that when a Rebellion has been started against the Government it is tantamount to a declaration of war. War cannot be conducted in accordance with standards of humanity to which we are accustomed in peace. Should not officers and men who through no choice of their own are called upon to discharge these distasteful duties, be in all fairness accorded that support which has been promised to them . . . ? ”

After such assurances, after such employment, General Dyer might be forgiven if he supposed that his Government approved and would defend his action.

It was noted by the warier in such matters that the inquiry was curiously limited: a Committee “to investigate the recent disturbances in Bombay, Delhi, and the Punjab, their causes and the measures taken to cope with them” was evidently not intended to consider the significance of the wider movement, extending from the riots in Calcutta to the plot in Peshawar.

As to the Committee itself, its President was a man unknown to India, a Liberal lawyer and politician who had been Solicitor-General for Scotland in the Asquith administration, and had been made afterwards a Senator of the College of Justice in Edinburgh. Lord Hunter showed himself to be a mild-mannered man, probably a little bemused by his political preconceptions, and certainly disabled by his ignorance of the country, its languages, and its people. There was, in fact, no member of the Committee with any experience either of the Punjab or the Executive Service. Mr Rankin was a Judge of the High Court, Calcutta; Mr Rice had seen all his service

in Burma, and as Secretary in the Home Department could hardly be called independent of the Government of India ; Sir George Barrow, commanding the Peshawar Division, represented the Higher Command ; Mr Thomas Smith, an English merchant long resident in Lucknow, was evidently overawed by the company of lawyers in which he found himself. Of Indian lawyers there were three, who acted together. One of them, Pandit Jagat Narayan, from the United Provinces, was a politician who had rather outrageously slandered Sir Michael O'Dwyer in a public speech some time before, and had been compelled to withdraw his words ; another, Sir Chimanlal Harilal Setalvad, had been prevented from entering the Punjab from Bombay by General Beynon under martial law.¹ Sir Michael O'Dwyer protested against the first of these two appointments, but his protest was ignored.

Before this Committee, then, sitting at Lahore, General Dyer appeared as a witness on the 19th November 1919. He had depended for his papers on Captain Briggs ; but a day or two before he received a telegram from Bannu that Briggs was ill and could not come. He was at that moment, although General Dyer did not know it, at the point of death. Mrs Dyer tells me that her husband was greatly disturbed by the news. Not only was he anxious for the safety of his friend, but he was disabled at the outset in the presentation of his case. " Briggs has all the papers," he said to his wife. " What the deuce will happen to all my papers ? "

¹ He had been engaged as an advocate to defend some of the prisoners on their trial for rebellion before the Martial Law Commission.

Thus General Dyer, with neither friend nor counsel to aid him, appeared before the Committee. As he went in he was met by General Beynon, who gave him a friendly hint in passing that he would be wise to confine himself to the facts of the military situation as they had seen it in the Jallianwala Bagh. Now General Dyer had put these facts or some of them in the statement prepared for the Higher Command which was before the Committee. "The crowd," he there said, "was so dense that if a determined rush had been made at any time, arms or no arms, my small force must naturally have been overpowered, and consequently I was very careful not giving the mob a chance of organising."¹ And Captain Briggs in his report had added the clue to the continuance of the firing: "It looked for a minute as if they were meaning to rush us." In his spoken evidence, however, General Dyer either forgot or disdained to defend himself upon these grounds.

At this point I may suggest a caution as to the record of the spoken evidence. Sir Michael O'Dwyer, who demanded a copy of what he had said, found it so full of mistakes that, after correcting some pages, he sent it back as hopeless. General Dyer could take no such precaution, as he was never allowed to see the report of his evidence²; but I have a

¹ 'Evidence,' vol. iii. p. 203.

² "I understand that the reason why General Dyer did not correct his evidence was because of his duties on the Frontier at the time, and I hope the House will take that into account."—Mr Montagu, 7th July 1920 (Hansard, Fifth Series, vol. cxxxi. col. 1413). General Dyer (at Jamrud) was within easy reach of the Committee; he did not correct his evidence because he was not given the opportunity.

copy of the Committee's report annotated in his own hand, and in several places where he was quoted he disclaims the quotations. Thus, for example, on page 112 he is represented as saying, "I have made up my mind that I would do all men to death if they were going to continue the meeting." General Dyer's annotation, "I emphatically deny this," has probability to support it, since it is difficult to imagine any Englishman using such a phrase as "do all men to death," although it is easy to suppose an Indian *babu* putting such words in his mouth. And again on page 113, where he is represented as saying, "Strike terror throughout the Punjab," General Dyer disclaims the words: "No. I did not admit this." And on reading over General Dyer's evidence, I have found remarks so extraordinary that I conclude they could not have been made by the witness. Thus, for example (on page 124), General Dyer is represented as saying of the prisoners in the Sherwood case, "I did not know they would be found guilty; when they were not found guilty, I lashed them."

Puzzled by these and other remarks hardly less preposterous, I took the precaution of seeing Mr Watson, who reported the case for the 'Pioneer.' He told me that the Committee had got itself into such a mess over the report of the evidence that he had been called in to help, and what was finally printed was a mixture of his notes and the official report patched up together. These things being so, it would be manifestly unfair to judge General Dyer on the record of his spoken evidence. After

all, it is not by what he said but by what he did that he should be judged.

It is essential, however, to the understanding of the man not to misunderstand his motives. If they were as they have been represented, cruelty, revenge, and tyranny, then I have misread General Dyer's character in telling the story of his life. He was not, in my view, that sort of man. I know also that when he spoke of the massacre to his friends and to his family, which was not often, he spoke of it with horror as something he had hated doing but had had to do. He had made his repugnance clear in the written statement then before the Committee. "I had," he wrote, "a choice of carrying out a very distasteful and horrible duty or of neglecting to do my duty, of suppressing disorder or of becoming responsible for all future bloodshed." Again, when Mr Justice Rankin asked him if it was not "a resort to what has been called frightfulness for the benefit of the Punjab districts as a whole," General Dyer replied with evident feeling, "I think it was a horrible duty for me to perform." One of the Indian lawyers developed the line of attack thus opened by his English colleague.

Q. I take it that your idea in starting that action was to strike terror ?

A. Call it what you like. I was going to punish them. My idea from the Military point of view was to make a wide impression . . .

.

Q. You thought that by striking terror in that manner you would save the British Raj ? You thought that the British Raj was in danger ?

A. No. The British Raj is a mighty thing. It would not be in great danger, but it might bring about more bloodshed, more looting, more lives lost.

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Q. Did it ever occur to you that by adopting this method of 'frightfulness'—excuse the term—you were really doing a great disservice to the British Raj by driving this discontent deep?

A. No. It only struck me that at the time it was my duty to do this, and that it was a horrible duty.¹

General Dyer was keen enough to perceive that such questions covered an attack both upon himself and the cause he served. As for himself, he could pass it over with contempt: "Call it what you like." But when his country was involved, he would give nothing away, not even to justify his own action. Thus another of these Indian lawyers took up the attack.

Q. And when you came to Amritsar . . . you did not find anything from which you could apprehend danger to the British Raj?

A. Not to the British Raj. I apprehended the danger of mutiny, loss of life, riot, bloodshed, and all that sort of thing, but I never imagined that that would end the British Raj.

Q. Not that there was anything aimed at the British Raj?

A. No, I did not say that, because the act of rebellion is aimed at the British Raj.²

I find also that in his spoken as well as his written evidence, General Dyer laboured to make the military situation clear. He gave an account of the

¹ 'Minutes of Evidence,' vol. iii, p. 126.

² *Ibid.*, p. 137.

way in which the railway lines and telegraphs had been cut all round him, so that he felt himself surrounded.

"I thought they were trying to isolate me and my forces. Everything pointed to the fact that there was a widespread movement, and that it was not confined to Amritsar alone. I looked upon these men as rebels who were trying to isolate my forces and cut me off from other supplies. Therefore I considered it my duty to fire on them and to fire well."¹

He gave, besides, a concise account of his deficiency in troops, and of his reasons for fearing an uprising in the Manjha. Nor did he leave them in any doubt that he had to consider the possibility of an attack from the mob.

Q. Now when you reached the Jallianwala Bagh there was no apprehension of your being attacked as the soldiers were there, or was there a possibility?

A. There was certainly a possibility.²

He gave besides in one concise sentence his reason for continuing to fire: "If I had fired a little I should be wrong in firing at all."³

Thus, apart from his omission to tell his examiners of how he gained the impression that the mob was about to attack, it cannot be said that he failed to put the military situation before the Committee. And Sir George Barrow, the one member who had any understanding of what must have passed through a soldier's mind, brought out his point of view.

¹ 'Minutes of Evidence,' vol. iii. p. 118.

² *Ibid.*, p. 135.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

Q. When you referred once to the seriousness of the situation you said that unless one was faced with a situation of that sort, it is difficult to realise what it means ?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. That is, the necessity for prompt action was so essential that there was no time for further reflection ?

A. Yes, sir.

.

Q. And also perhaps you will agree with me that when one is faced with such a situation, it creates quite a different impression on one's mind to what it will when you are simply reading about it ?

A. Quite true, sir.¹

And now to come to the General's indiscretions, as they have been called. He has been blamed for saying, " Yes, I think it quite possible that I could have dispersed them perhaps even without firing," and adding, but " they would all come back and laugh at me, and I considered I would be making myself a fool." The phrase, " making myself a fool," does not strike me as authentic ; but if he did say something of the sort, it is fair to add that in the next sentence he described the situation as " very serious indeed." He had come with his little force through a mile or so of narrow and winding streets ; if that great mob had dispersed it might have circled round, not merely to laugh at him but to surround him, ambush his little force in one of those tortuous lanes, and stone it from the flat roofs of the houses. It was not merely a possibility. It had happened, as the Committee well knew, in Ahmedabad, where a party of armed police were " absorbed

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

in a dense crowd," and could only stand at bay, protecting their wounded comrades until the timely arrival of troops, and if it had happened to a force of thirty or forty police in Ahmedabad, it might have happened to a force of ninety soldiers in Amritsar. That was one possibility, which certainly occurred to General Dyer. There was another, more probable and more dangerous, that the mob might simply disperse—and laugh—pending developments favouring them, and threatening the cause he served: their agents had gone to Peshawar; Lahore had risen; Delhi was working, rebellion was spreading; they could afford to wait—could he?

A great deal was afterwards made of the General's statement that he might have used—although as a matter of fact he did not use—machine-guns. The cross-examination on this point by one of the Indian lawyers consisted of a long series of hypothetical questions. Machine-guns, General Dyer freely admitted, were in the armoured cars. He would have used them "if the necessity arose, and I was attacked or anything else like that."

And then :—

Q. When you arrived there you were not able to take the armoured cars in because the passage was too narrow?

A. Yes.

Q. Supposing the passage was sufficient to allow the armoured cars to go in, would you have opened fire with the machine-guns?

A. I think probably yes.

Q. In that case the casualties would have been very much higher?

A. Yes.

Q. And you did not open fire with the machine-guns

simply by the accident of the armoured cars not being able to get in ?

A. I have answered you. I have said if they had been there, the probability is that I would have opened fire with them.

Q. With the machine-guns straight ?

A. With the machine-guns.¹

Now if we fairly consider the matter, the difference between killing a man or a number of men with machine-guns and killing them with rifles is rather a question of mechanics than of morality. It would probably make no difference to those who were killed, and the more or less would depend in either case on the number of rounds fired. This, I suppose, would be the view of all soldiers and of such civilians as consider the matter dispassionately. What offends the sensitive ear is the blunt way in which a plain fact is put, and the General's way of putting a thing is only important in so far as it bears on his point of view. But he had already told the Committee, not once only but several times, and made it clear in his written statement, that he regarded the shooting as a "horrible duty." If mere words are to be used in evidence against him, then mere words may be used as evidence in his favour. Those who ransacked the evidence for proof of brutality have found it convenient to ignore the expressions of humanity. Again we must appeal from the words to the facts.

We have seen what the facts were ; yet General Dyer did not choose to defend himself on the ground that his little force was in danger, or that he had

¹ ' Minutes of Evidence, vol. iii. p. 126.

reason to fear a rush by the crowd. He took his stand upon considerations at once larger and more controversial, and in his written statement made a present to his enemies of all that they laboured to bring out in cross-examination. Here is the passage :—

“ My work that morning in personally conducting the proclamation must be looked upon as one transaction with what had now come to pass. There was no reason further to parley with the mob, evidently they were there to defy the arm of the law.

The responsibility was very great. If I fired I must fire with good effect ; a small amount of firing would be a criminal act of folly.

I had the choice of carrying out a very distasteful and horrible duty or of neglecting to do my duty, of suppressing disorder or of becoming responsible for all future bloodshed.

We cannot be very brave unless we be possessed of a greater fear. I have considered the matter from every point of view. My duty and my military instincts told me to fire. My conscience was also clear on that point. What faced me was what on the morrow would be the *Dauda Fauj*.

I fired and continued to fire until the crowd dispersed, and I consider this as the least amount of firing which would produce the necessary moral and widespread effect it was my duty to produce if I was to justify my action. If more troops had been at hand the casualties would have been greater in proportion. *It was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd ; but one of producing a sufficient moral effect, from a military point of view, not only on those who were present but more especially throughout the Punjab. There could be no question of undue severity.”*¹

There is this also to be said of the spoken evidence. It was mostly in answer to a running fire of questions

¹ General Dyer's written statement. 'Evidence,' vol. iii. p. 203.

by three lawyers in succession, who cross-examined in a way that no regular court would have allowed. Without quoting too much at length, let me give the essentials of one characteristic passage :—

- Q. . . . Suppose . . . you had not issued any proclamation . . . and supposing you were informed that about ten thousand or fifteen thousand persons were assembled . . . and supposing you had done what you really did . . . would not the result have been the same ?
- A. I cannot understand.
- Q. You say that firing was absolutely necessary . . . supposing that the meeting . . . was held there without your issuing any proclamation and you had adopted the same methods, would the results have been the same ?
- A. I am only going into what I actually did. I cannot go into suppositions.
- Q. . . . Supposing this meeting was held and it was not prohibited by you, if you had gone, you would have prohibited it ?
- A. . . . I had issued this proclamation and . . . had tried to prevent them from meeting . . .
-
- Q. You do not contend that when all those villagers to whom no oral proclamation was issued by means of tom-tom assembled there in disobedience of that order, this would be considered to be an unlawful assembly, and therefore the meeting would have to be dispersed ?
- A. Would you put that question again.
- Q. . . . Therefore I say that supposing this meeting had not been prohibited and you were informed that a seditious meeting was being held and you had gone there and had taken steps and the news got abroad that a seditious meeting was held and people were shot, would not the effect be the same ?

- A. I cannot say. I would rather have it as I did it. I do not know the effect of what it would have been if it had been something else.
- Q. Would you justify your action supposing the meeting had not been prohibited . . . ?
- A. I think if a man had gone on firing without doing what I did, he would not be justified.¹

Mr Watson, who reported the case for the 'Pioneer,' tells me that the room was full of people who applauded such questions; that Lord Hunter made no attempt to regulate his colleagues and that their hatred filled the place as with an atmosphere. I asked him if General Dyer lost his temper. He said that, on the contrary, he seemed only like a man very weary, who gave up trying to put his case when he saw that it was useless.

¹ 'Evidence,' vol. iii. p. 131.

CHAPTER XXII.

SENTENCE.

DEATH OF CAPTAIN BRIGGS—NEEDLESS DISCOURTESIES—SENTENCE AND SILENCE—AN EXTRAORDINARY MESSAGE—CONTRADICTORY ORDERS—A FAREWELL DEMONSTRATION—A BROKEN-HEARTED POONCHI.

IN his spoken evidence General Dyer made frequent reference to Captain Briggs. Pressed, for example, for a list of names given to him on the night of the 11th-12th April by Ashraf Khan, he said that it was a long time ago, and they had been moving about a lot on the frontier; but "he may have it. He is a very good Brigade-Major. He may possibly have it." And again, "It may be so if Major Briggs said so"; "you have to ask Major Briggs," and "whatever Major Briggs says may be right."¹ On that very day, although General Dyer did not know it, Captain Briggs went laughingly on to the operating table at Bannu. "I'll bet you five pounds," he said, "I'll be up in a few days." He was operated on for appendicitis, but perforation due to enteric was found. He had been working hard for

¹ 'Evidence,' vol. iii. pp. 129-130. General Dyer probably said, "must be right."

months in that terrible climate, "putting out the fire," which had broken the strength, although not the spirit, of that gallant young soldier. He died the next day. Thus when Captain Briggs was called before the Committee he did not appear. He had been summoned to what I hope I may be allowed to call a more nearly impartial tribunal.

Having given his evidence, General Dyer returned to Jullundur. He was astonished at the reports of what he was alleged to have said which appeared in the newspapers; but as a soldier on the Active List is not allowed to write to the Press, he published no disclaimer. He returned to Lahore to hear the evidence of General Benyon, and was invited to tea at Government House. There Sir Edward Maclagan, who had succeeded Sir Michael O'Dwyer, congratulated him on his evidence, and wished that all Englishmen would stand up for women as General Dyer had done.¹

Then General Dyer went back to duty at Jamrud, but became very ill shortly after Christmas, and was sent down to Jullundur in the care of a doctor and bright yellow with infective jaundice. Recovering a little he went for a walk in a very cold wind, and returned in terrible pain with gout in the head. His nights were delirious; but Mrs Dyer did not dare to give him the sleeping draught he had been

¹ No doubt in reference to what General Dyer said under cross-examination on the 'Crawling Order.' In a flush of indignation he described the beating of Miss Sherwood, and spoke of the honour and sanctity in which all good men, whatever the race and people, held women. If men, he added, want to fight let them fight, but let women be left out of it. There was silence in the room for a moment, and then a burst of applause. The passage is not reported in evidence.

ordered for fear of his heart, which was by that time affected.

Being in this wretched state of health, General Dyer felt that he could no longer do justice to his work, and applied for six months' leave home. On the 30th January 1920 he was told that "the Commander-in-Chief regrets he is unable to sanction leave. . . . If General Dyer still wishes to proceed home, it will be necessary for him to vacate his appointment." Despite this curt message, he had still no reason to believe that his action had been disapproved by Headquarters, for that same day he received the following message :—

" 1. His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief approves of Brigadier-General R. E. H. Dyer officiating in Command of the 2nd Division *vice* Major-General Sir Charles Dobell, appointed to exercise command Northern Command pending further orders.

2. Inform me name of next senior officer who will officiate in Command of the 5th Brigade *vice* General Dyer.

3. Authority—M. S. Chief's telegram, No. 10869/3, dated 28-1-20."

This was obviously a very important step in promotion ; the officiating command carried with it in the normal course the substantive succession, and the 2nd Division, with its headquarters at Rawalpindi, close to the frontier, was one of the most important in the Indian Army.

But then came a blow, both heavy in itself and ominous of worse. On the 14th of February, General Dyer received two further telegrams. In the first, "Chief approves Brigadier-General Caulfield continuing in command 2nd Division until Major-

General Sheppard takes (? over).” The second, “. . . in view of the above, Brigadier-General Dyer will not now take up command of the Division on his return from leave.”

General Dyer was not to get his Division after all ; for some reason or other the Commander-in-Chief had changed his mind. General Dyer received these telegrams in hospital at Jullundur ; but his illness would hardly by itself account for the decision. It may be only an odd coincidence that on the 18th of February 1920, only four days later, the following question and answer appeared in the proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council :—

“ The Hon’ble Mr Kamini Kumar Chanda asked :—

- (A). Is it a fact that General Dyer received promotion after the firing in Jallianwala Bagh ?
- (B). Will Government be pleased to state the different posts and places to which he was appointed after the said firing ?

His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief replied :—

- A. The answer is in the negative.
- B. It would serve no useful purpose to enumerate either the posts or places where General Dyer has served since the firing at Amritsar. He is now commanding a Brigade at Jamrud.”¹

The custom is to give notice of such questions some days beforehand. Could it be that Sir Charles Monro’s right-about-turn of the 14th of February was effected by the challenge of Babu Kamini Kumar Chanda ? If it were so, then never before had the Commander-in-Chief of His Majesty’s armies in India beat so precipitate a retreat before so insignificant an enemy.

¹ Proceedings of the Imperial Legislative Council, vol. lviii, p. 719.

It is of course possible, and indeed probable, that as General Dyer was unfit for his duties at that time, his immediate superior reported adversely on his work to the Commander-in-Chief, whose decision may have been based on that ground. What remains certain is that Dyer's strength at last gave out. The accumulated effects of malaria, of those terrible cramps which attacked his enfeebled body more and more frequently, of the fierce sun of the frontier and the superhuman effort of Thal, of the mental and physical strains and trials he had undergone—all came home to him at once with usurious interest. Mrs Dyer being herself too ill to nurse him at Flagstaff House, he lay in great pain and misery of mind at the British Hospital in Jullundur. On the 5th of March he received a telegram sent to the General of the 2nd Division by the Commander-in-Chief on the previous day:—

“ Brigadier-General Dyer at present on sick leave Jullundur should be directed to proceed Delhi on 9th March and report to me his presence. Will be required in Delhi for some days.”

This message, it will be noted, omitted to ask the rather obvious question, whether General Dyer was fit to travel. The medical officer in command of the hospital refused to allow his patient to be moved, and on the 18th of March the General commanding the Division sent a further urgent message to the officer commanding at Jullundur:—

“ Direct General Dyer to proceed to Delhi on 22nd. Report to M. S. Chief at 10.30 A.M. on Tuesday 23rd.”

In forwarding this message the officer commanding at Jullundur, with rather more consideration than had been shown by General Dyer's old friend, the Commander-in-Chief, added the following inquiry to the officer commanding the hospital. "Will you kindly inform me urgently whether Brigadier-General Dyer, C.B., will be in a fit state of health to travel to Delhi on the date stated above?"

The medical officer demurred; but on the 20th of March, General Dyer received this telegram from the Commander-in-Chief himself:—

"If well enough to travel, kindly report yourself to the Military Secretary at Delhi at 10 o'clock on Tuesday morning next, the 23rd instant."

In face of these urgencies, General Dyer insisted on going, and he was taken out of bed and put in the train under the care of Captain Beamish of the Royal Army Medical Corps. No arrangements had been made at Delhi to meet General Dyer, and he had to wait for twenty-four hours for his audience with the Commander-in-Chief. When at last he entered the ante-room he was met by Sir Havelock Hudson, the Adjutant-General, who told him the decision of Sir Charles Monro, that he was to be deprived of his command, as the Commander-in-Chief agreed with the censure of the Committee. General Dyer put the obvious point that as he had never been tried he should not be condemned. Sir Havelock Hudson replied that the matter had been decided, and all that remained was for General Dyer to see the Chief, and he added, "The Chief is very

much upset. I am sure you will not say anything to distress His Excellency."

"No," said General Dyer; "the last thing I would wish to do would be to distress His Excellency."

General Dyer then went into the Commander-in-Chief's room, and heard his sentence from His Excellency's lips. He said not a word, and so returned to the hospital at Jullundur. Mrs Dyer was by that time very ill, but the doctors did not dare to tell him.

Some days before, on the 16th of March, a Medical Board had recommended the General for six months' leave to England. He therefore proposed to take his sick leave and then resign his appointment; but this suggestion was rejected by the Commander-in-Chief, who added in a letter of the 24th March signed by the Secretary, "Your application for permission to resign your appointment should be made as soon as possible, and forwarded through the proper channels, for disposal under the Chief's orders. The subsequent orders granting you permission will state what—if any—war or other leave will be admitted to you."

On the 27th March 1920, to his immediate superior, the General Officer Commanding the 2nd Division at Rawalpindi, General Dyer wrote the following letter:—

"SIR,—I have the honour to state that during my recent visit to Delhi the Adjutant-General in India informed me that, owing to the opinion expressed by the Hunter Commission regarding my action of Amritsar during April 1919, it was necessary for me to resign my appointment as Brigadier-

General Commanding the 5th Infantry Brigade. Accordingly I hereby ask that I be relieved of that appointment.

I have, &c."

There was then nothing to do but for General Dyer to bid farewell to his friends and wind up his private affairs in India. He therefore applied to the officer commanding the hospital to be allowed to go to Jamrud and Rawalpindi to hand over and transact some private business, and was granted this permission by the medical authorities; but the next day (on the 27th of March) the hospital received an order that "Brigadier-General Dyer must not leave station on leave without further orders from Northern Command. Inform me and acknowledge." This extraordinary message, which almost suggested that General Dyer was a prisoner, was also sent to the Brigade Headquarters and to other local authorities.

General Dyer protested that he had been discharged from hospital, and found it "very necessary to go on private affairs to Rawalpindi prior to leaving India," and on the 1st of April sanction was accorded. On that day also passages were allotted to the General and his wife on a transport sailing from Bombay on the 10th. On the 3rd he received a telegram: "Application acceptance passages cannot be approved by Army Commander. You must be present at Jullundur on Monday, when Chief will be at Jullundur"; but on the following day this message was cancelled, and "Army Commander approves your accepting passages sailing 10th."

I am unable to explain these curious and contradictory orders, which suggest that the Commander-

in-Chief, in his sudden and belated access of moral indignation at the events of Amritsar, thought it necessary to be discourteous to General Dyer.

It is probable that the Higher Command feared a demonstration in his favour among the troops at the great military centre of Rawalpindi, a thing that General Dyer would have disliked no less ; but the result of the delay was that General Dyer, in his late and hurried visit to Rawalpindi, had no time to wind up his affairs, and the Alliance Bank of Simla building being burnt down shortly afterwards, the family had the greatest difficulty in recovering its property.

The General and his wife set out from Jullundur at night, and when they went down to the railway station half an hour before the train started they found the approach for some distance lit up by flares which had been placed along both sides of the road and under them the sepoys of all the Indian regiments standing at the salute. There was, besides, a great guard of honour of all the non-commissioned officers at the railway station itself. This demonstration had been arranged by the men and the N.C.O.'s upon their own initiative without any authority from their officers ; but the officers came down with their wives, to bid their General farewell at the station, which was packed with a great concourse of people.¹

General Dyer was very shy of such demonstrations, but this had so much in it both of spontaneity

¹ All the officers except those of the Connaught Rangers, who had been forbidden by their colonel. The battalion, by the way, was shortly afterwards disbanded on account of a mutiny,

and feeling that it touched and comforted him. He left Jullundur with the cheers of his comrades ringing in his ears.

It was nevertheless a miserable journey. General Dyer himself was so ill that Captain Beamish insisted on attending him to Bombay, and Mrs Dyer was also an invalid. Bombay was so thronged and in so terrible a state of confusion that they could find no quarters anywhere, save at last in a hostel dormitory among rows of beds packed close together. The faithful Allah Dad proposed to accompany his master to England ; but he was found on board the *Assaye* by one of the ship's officers, and as Indian servants were not allowed, he was hustled down the gangway. The little Poonchi sat on the quay and wept as if his heart would break.

It was a personal grief to the General, for he was very fond of his servant, and was, besides, rather helpless in the ordering of his own effects. The General, however, soon forgot these and other troubles in the cares of his fellow-passengers. There was in particular a young British officer who had been brought in no condition to travel from Calcutta to Bombay, and lay desperately ill in the crowded discomfort of the troopship. As the arrangements for the sick were miserably inadequate, the General and his wife attended to their fellow-passenger. Mrs Dyer, an old campaigner, set up her little military cooking stove and made jellies in her cabin. The invalid was pathetically grateful for these attentions, but was too far gone to recover ; he died and was buried at sea.

The sea air, although it did not save poor Smythe,

worked wonders for General Dyer and his wife. The General recovered something of his old buoyancy and cheerfulness, and to entertain the ship gave a very amusing lecture on his campaign in the Sarhad. By the time he reached Southampton, although the mischief was deep-seated, his appearance gave the illusion of returning health.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE COMMITTEE REPORTS.

DISCIPLINE, BUT NOT DISGRACE—SIR H. WILSON'S COMMENTS—
 "THE SOLDIER THROWN TO THE WINDS"—THE CHURCHILL-
 MONTAGU COMBINE—ALL "DUE TO THE FROCKS"—CON-
 FUSED REASONING—CONTRADICTIONS AND MISSTATEMENTS.

THE reader may complain that so far he has heard nothing of the Hunter Committee's Report, upon which General Dyer was removed from his command ; and for this good reason, that although it was presented to the Government of India on the 8th of March 1920, General Dyer had not seen it when he arrived in England on the 2nd of May following. He had been told by the Adjutant-General on the 22nd of March only that it was adverse to himself, and he did not dispute the right of the Commander-in-Chief in India to relieve him of his brigade with or without cause assigned. He had, however, reason to fear that his punishment was to be carried a step further, and that he was to be dismissed from the Army. Although he had submitted to discipline, he could not submit to disgrace.

On the 10th of May, therefore (from the Curzon Hotel, where he was staying), he wrote the following

letter to General Cobbe, then Military Secretary at the India Office :—

“ I have the honour to say that I understand that the action I took at Amritsar in 1919 is to be considered by the Army Council. If this is the case I would ask that I be permitted to represent my case personally, attended if necessary by a legal adviser. I am of opinion that I had not a proper opportunity during the Hunter Committee of fully representing my case.”

This letter brought no immediate reply, for which we find a reason in the ‘Life and Diaries’ of Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson.¹ The papers of the Dyer case reached the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, as we are there told, on the morning of the 14th May. At a meeting of the Army Council on that same day, according to the Diary—

“ Winston made a long speech, prejudging the case, and in effect saying that the Cabinet, and he, had decided to throw out Dyer, but that it was advisable for the Army Council to agree. It appeared to me, listening, that the story was a very simple one. The Frocks have got India (as they have Ireland) into a filthy mess. On that the soldiers are called in and act. This is disapproved by all the disloyal elements, and the soldier is thrown to the winds. It is quite simple.”

‘Winston’ was acting at the instigation of Mr Montagu, as we gather from the correspondence between the Government of India and the Secretary of State, to be more fully considered later. “ You have reported to me,” Mr Montagu there wrote,

¹ ‘Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, Bart., G.C.B., D.S.O.: his Life and Diaries,’ by Major-General Sir C. E. Callwell, K.C.B., vol. ii, p. 237.

"that the Commander-in-Chief has directed Brigadier-General Dyer to resign his appointment as Brigade Commander, has informed him that he will receive no further employment in India, and that you have concurred. I approve this decision, and the circumstances of the case have been referred to the Army Council." ¹

The Secretary of State for War met with unexpected opposition. Sir Henry Wilson said that as he had not had time to read the papers, he was "quite unable to express his opinion." The other military members took up the same stand, "though Winston said the matter was pressing."

After the meeting was over the military members consulted together: the C.I.G.S. suggested that "it was our duty to protect a brother officer until he had been proved in the wrong by a properly constituted Court of Inquiry"; they agreed to read over the papers and meet on the following Monday. Next day Sir Henry Wilson saw General Rawlinson:—

"I explained the Dyer situation to him, and how clear I was that in the near future we should have many Dyer cases both in India and in Ireland, and that if we did not stand by our own soldiers we should lose their confidence. Then they would not act, and then we should lose the Empire. Rawly cordially agreed—up to the point of saying that if Dyer was jettisoned by the Frocks without a proper military Court of Inquiry, he (Rawly) would not go as C. in C. to India."

The military members met and agreed on the morning of the 17th. They decided not to "agree

¹ Cmd. 705, p. 25.

to Dyer being thrown out on the evidence before us," and to propose, on the precedent of the Mesopotamia Inquiry, that the accused should be given the Report and asked to answer it. Then came the Army Council meeting:—

"Winston tried again to rush a decision to remove Dyer from the Army, saying that it was only a matter of form. I at once said that I could not agree, that we had not sufficient evidence on which to form a judgment, and that we must ask Dyer to state a case. This was a bomb for Winston; but when A.G., Q.M.G., and M.G.O. (the latter reading extracts from a speech of F.E.'s about Mesopotamia) joined in and agreed, Winston abruptly closed the subject by saying that he would consult the law officers, and would have an Army Council meeting later to discuss the subject further."

There followed a very bad quarter of an hour between the Secretary of State for War and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Mr Churchill complained "that he was much upset by this 'pistol at his head by the military members,' and that in future he would have to take precaution against these 'ambushes.' " Sir Henry Wilson replied that "he had only himself to thank," and proceeded to give him a very vigorous opinion of his action in the matter. "He tried to argue, but the more he argued the deeper I put him in the 'muck heap.' He gave it up at last, saying he would call a Cabinet Meeting . . . and then have another Army Council Meeting. I finished by saying that nothing should be decided or done until we had another A.C. Meeting, and to this he agreed."

I gather that as much as possible was kept back

as long as possible from the military members. When Sir Michael O'Dwyer saw the Hunter Committee's Report on his return from India, he applied to Mr Montagu to be allowed to make a statement, not on his own behalf but to explain those circumstances of Amritsar which the Committee had failed to grasp. When that application was refused, he applied officially to the Army Council to be heard before they passed orders on Dyer's case. That application also was rejected, and it was never even seen by the military members of the Army Council.

General Dyer, having received no reply to his letter of the 10th May, wrote another letter direct to the Army Council. From the Field-Marshal's comment on the second letter, it seems doubtful if he had then seen the first¹ :—

"We received this morning (the 17th May) a letter from Dyer asking to be allowed to rebut the Hunter Report. Our (military members') opinion was that we should reply by sending him a copy of the Report, *which he has not seen*, and asking him for his answer. This position was so strong that even Winston was not able to refuse our proposal, and to-night he agreed that he thought it was reasonable."

This 'reasonable proposal,' then, was accepted on the 17th May, yet it was not until the 9th of June that the Secretary of the War Office, Sir Herbert Creedy, passed it on to General Dyer. According to Sir Henry Wilson, the delay was due to the Secretary of State for War, who did not want General Dyer's

¹ Sir Henry Wilson, however, refers to the letter of 10th May in his diary of 9th June.

defence to be seen by the House of Commons until after it had debated his case. Thus the entry of 9th June (vol. 2, page 242):—

“ ‘About 5’clock Edmund Talbot rang me up to ask when we would be ready with the Dyer case. I pointed out to him that our letter to Dyer telling him he might put in a statement about the Hunter Commission had not yet gone out, as Winston said it was not to go out till after the Debate. Dyer wrote to us on 10th May, asking if he might put in a statement, and we have not answered him! And all this is due to the Frocks. Talbot told me that Asquith is demanding an early decision—Asquith, if you please—and that the Debate which was to-morrow is put off till next week, and Asquith is clamouring for Monday or Tuesday.

I said some biting things about Asquith, and finished off by saying that by Winston’s orders the letter to Dyer had not gone out yet, and that Winston could not be found. Later on Montagu came over to see the A.G., and said it was imperative to get the letter off at once, and Bonar said it must be sent, so A.G. sent it.’ ”

Ambushes indeed !

In the meantime, on the 27th of May, the Report of the Hunter Committee, and the correspondence thereupon of the Government of India and the Secretary of State, were published.

In publishing these papers before the Army Council had come to its decision, Mr Montagu may have calculated on coercing that body. Whatever his reason, one result was that General Dyer saw for the first time in the newspapers of the 27th May the judgment upon which he had been condemned more than two months before.

The Report itself is a book of 140 pages, almost

equally divided between the majority and minority opinions. That Lord Hunter was deluded by hopes of unanimity is suggested by the almost comical euphemisms used in the early pages to describe what the Government had held to be a rebellion and the Secretary of State had called both a rebellion and a revolution. Thus, for example, of the Delhi mob: "There is evidence that they objected to people riding in *tongas* and motor-cars, and showed their objection in certain cases by getting people to alight from vehicles in which they were driving"; of the contractor who was beaten, "in the scuffle he was hurt"; of the railway property destroyed at Delhi, "it does not appear that this was done intentionally"; of the attack on the police, "their attitude was gradually becoming one of hostility to the authorities"; of the 'general causes,' "... the by-products—undesigned and unexpected—of the Satyagraha movement, with its doctrine of civil disobedience to laws and of the *hartal* which gave an opportunity for this doctrine to produce result in the action of numbers of the people"; of the agitation in Amritsar, "for some time before April 1919 public meetings about various questions, mostly but not entirely political, had shown that Amritsar had taken, or was prepared to take, great interest in public matters"; of the mob which poured out of the gates crying, "Where is the Deputy Commissioner? We will butcher him to pieces"—"it remains undeniable of this particular crowd that it was likely to cause a disturbance of the public peace and that the public security was manifestly endangered by it."

If Lord Hunter hoped to gain agreement by such pleasantries, he was disappointed. The Committee indeed contrived, by a good deal of slurring over, to agree in their account of Delhi and Bombay, but fell into a division over the Punjab, the British members taking one line and the Indians another. The majority freely admitted—in face of the Government proclamations they could hardly deny—that a large part of the province was in a state of rebellion ; but they refused to face either the causes or the consequences. After quoting Sir Michael O'Dwyer's opinion,¹ the Committee proceeded to this astonishing *non sequitur* :—

“ The action taken by General Dyer has also been described by others as having saved the situation in the Punjab and having averted a rebellion on a scale similar to the Mutiny. It does not, however, appear to us possible to draw this conclusion, particularly in view of the fact that it is not proved that a conspiracy to overthrow British power had been formed prior to the outbreaks.”²

By a parity of reasoning, a fire is not likely to spread because it is not proved to be the result of arson ! Incidentally, Lord Hunter had refused to consider important evidence of the conspiracy as being outside his terms of reference, as, for example, at Peshawar. A conspiracy is always difficult to prove, but the difficulty is notably increased when

¹ “ Speaking of events with perhaps more knowledge of the then situation than any one else, I have no hesitation in saying that General Dyer's action that day was the deciding factor in crushing the rebellion, the seriousness of which is only now being generally realised.”—Sir Michael O'Dwyer.

² Report, p. 31.

the evidence is excluded. The minority was more logical ; it held that there was no conspiracy and rebellion, and therefore no justification.

The Committee justified the Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar in his action on the 10th, although it regretted that warning was not given to Europeans in the city ; but it severely censured the two native police officers who were in charge of the Kotwali :—

“ In any possible view both officers failed either to grasp or to attempt to cope with their responsibilities. Their lack of initiative and of reasonable precaution and the direct consequences of this are too plain for argument. Seventy-five armed men resolutely handled could, with ordinary skill and alertness, have made impossible the outrages which took place close to the Kotwali.”

And the minority agrees with this censure : “ . . . if the officer in charge of seventy-five armed police at the Kotwali, instead of showing woeful inaction, had done his duty, the worst crimes . . . would in all probability have been prevented.”¹

On this page of his copy there is an interesting annotation in General Dyer's hand : “ No. It is almost certain that police directed by an Indian would have refused to take the risk of opening fire.”

Ashraf Khan was too loyal to his service to plead that he could not rely upon his men, and too loyal to his superiors to plead that he had received no orders save to stand by. Nor did he put it that an Indian police officer is not encouraged nor even

¹ Report, p. 99.

permitted to fire without authority from a European magistrate. But if I may emulate the hypothetical method of the Committee, let us suppose that Ashraf Khan was a combination of Napoleon and Leonidas and that his men were inspired with the spirit of the Spartans at Thermopylæ; let us suppose further that without any one to read the Riot Act he had led the heroic seventy-five at one and the same time upon both sides of the Kotwali; that by miraculous intuition he had anticipated the attacks on the three banks and the Town Hall; that he had fired upon and routed the *lathi*-armed mobs many thousands strong in the narrow and tortuous lanes of the city; that he had thereby saved every European life and slain some hundreds of the rebels—what would the Committee have said about it?

As to the 13th, the Committee states the general view, "that the city was out of control and in revolt . . . that any Europeans going into it, unless protected by a strong force, would go to almost certain death, and that a 'state of war' was subsisting." It did not believe that the meeting of the 13th met in ignorance of the proclamation. "The majority, at all events, of the people who had assembled had done so in direct defiance of the proclamation issued in the interests of peace and order, many thinking that the reference to firing was mere bluff." As to the meeting itself, it found that "from 10,000 to 20,000 people were assembled;¹ that 379 people were killed, of whom 87 were villagers who had come into Amritsar from the neighbouring district,

¹ The Minority Report speaks of "from 15,000 to 20,000."

and that the number of wounded was probably three times as great as the number killed.”¹

The Committee admitted that General Dyer had good reason to be anxious. His communications were cut ; his supplies were liable to be intercepted ; he had reason to fear that a conspiracy was hatching near his headquarters ;² the mob was in possession of the city ; “ there was a widespread movement which was not confined to Amritsar alone ” ; General Dyer stood in the midst of a rebellion. In these circumstances “ we believe that he honestly considered that he was called upon in the discharge of his duty to take the extreme step which he did.” But the Committee held nevertheless that his action was ‘ open to criticism ’ in two respects : the first, that he “ started firing without giving the people who had assembled a chance to disperse ” ; and the second, that he “ continued firing for a substantial period of time after the crowd had commenced to disperse.”

As to the first point, it was prepared to allow that “ the risk of a small force of soldiers being overwhelmed by a threatening mob may justify

¹ Report, p. 29. General Dyer's estimate of “between 200 and 300 killed” was a calculation based on the number of rounds fired. The Government began an inquiry on the subject on the 25th of June 1919, and found that 291 had been killed. Later inquiries, assisted by the Seva Samiti, an Indian political organisation, put the killed at 379. Other inquiries of a still later date placed the total of killed at under 280. The estimate of wounded as three times the number of killed was based on the results of musketry firing at long ranges, hardly applicable to the case. The number of wounded *traced* was under 600. The truth of these figures is impossible to determine. As the Government afterwards distributed a large sum of money among the families, it is probable that both for financial and political reasons the numbers were exaggerated.

² “ On the 13th of April he was informed by Mr Miles Irving that secret meetings had taken place near the Ram Bagh where his headquarters were.”—*Ibid.*, p. 30.

firing without the formality of giving a notice to disperse being observed"; and that the only person who can be the judge of such an emergency is the officer in command of the troops. It argued, however, that "General Dyer does not suggest the existence of such an emergency from anything observed by him in the demeanour of the crowd prior to his giving the order to fire," which seems a straining of the evidence since what General Dyer actually stated was this: ". . . the military situation had to be considered throughout the incident. The crowd was so dense that if a determined rush had been made at any time, arms or no arms, my small force must instantly have been overpowered, and consequently I was very careful of not giving the mob a chance of organising." And as General Dyer had twice in the previous two days been in contact with the Amritsar mob, he had had good opportunity of judging their temper as well as ample information of their hostile intentions.

As to the second point, we have already seen that General Dyer said nothing to the Committee of his impression that the mob was gathering for a rush, nor did the Committee examine General Dyer on the subject, although it had it on evidence.² The

¹ Besides the written statement of Captain Briggs, I understand that Mr Thompson, Chief Secretary to the Punjab Government, in his evidence before the Committee, said that General Dyer had told him, immediately after the event, what as we have seen he told Sir Michael O'Dwyer and General Beynon; but Mr Thompson's evidence was never published. If the Committee had asked General Dyer, it would no doubt have had from him what he stated and what he later wrote in his statement of the 3rd July 1920: "After some firing two groups appeared to be collecting as though to rush us, and on my Brigade-Major calling my attention to this, I directed fire specially to the two points in question and dispersed the groups."

Committee ignored the point altogether, preferring to base its comments wholly upon the General's later explanation of his motive: "I fired and continued to fire until the crowd dispersed, and I consider this is the least amount of firing which would produce the necessary moral and widespread effect it was my duty to produce if I was to justify my action. If more troops had been at hand the casualties would have been greater in proportion. It was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of producing a sufficient moral effect from the military point of view, not only on those who were present, but more especially throughout the Punjab. There could be no question of undue severity." ¹

It is upon this statement of his motive that the Committee censures General Dyer: "In our view this was unfortunately a mistaken conception of his duty. If necessary, a crowd that has assembled contrary to a proclamation issued to terminate disorder may have to be fired upon; but continued firing on that crowd cannot be justified because of the effect such firing may have upon people in other places. The employment of excessive measures is as likely as not to produce the opposite result to that desired." ²

Thus General Dyer was judged not by the actual result, which was an immediate pacification, but by the possible result, which might have been the opposite; not by his action only but by his explanation of it; not so much by what he did as by

¹ General Dyer's written statement. 'Evidence,' vol. iii. p. 203.

² Report, pp. 30-31.

what he might have done in circumstances which did not arise.¹

The Despatch of the Government of India which accompanied the Report bears all the signs of an extreme discomfort. The Governor-General in Council had declared parts of the Punjab to be in rebellion ; had proclaimed martial law ; had refused to give the civil authorities any power over the soldiers, and had promised to his servants, who were to use all means, "however drastic," "the fullest assurance of countenance and support"; the Government had employed and promoted General Dyer ; it had publicly defended his action in the Legislative Council. To accept the Committee's verdict was therefore a humiliation, a confession of error. It might even be called something worse : a punishment of a servant whom it knew in its heart to be right.

There are traces of this compunction in every sentence of its judgment. It admits that "the dispersal of the crowd was . . . a matter of vital importance in view of the situation which then existed in Amritsar, and stern measures to effect this end were certainly required"; that General Dyer was in a "position of great difficulty"; that he was "apprehensive of Amritsar being isolated, and had before him the danger of allowing mob rule

¹ When I use the word Committee, I mean, of course, the Majority, which consisted of all the European Members. The Minority, which consisted of all the Indian Members, found there "was no rebellion which required to be crushed," and came therefore to the logical conclusion that General Dyer's action was an "indiscriminate killing of innocent people," an "atrocious," a "frightfulness." Passages from evidence, more or less apocryphal, freely quoted in support of these censures, gave rise to the impression that General Dyer had spoken if he had not acted both stupidly and brutally.

to continue after the terrible events of the 10th"; it is "convinced that General Dyer acted honestly in the belief that he was doing what was right . . . and that in the result his action at the time checked the spread of the disturbances to an extent which it is difficult now to estimate." It nevertheless concluded that General Dyer's action was "indefensible," and "greatly exceeded the necessity of the occasion." Although General Dyer's action "resulted in an immediate discouragement of the forces of disorder," nevertheless it found that he "acted beyond the necessity of the case, beyond what any reasonable man could have thought to be necessary, and that he did not act with as much humanity as the case permitted."

There are some traces of the same compunction in the Despatch of the Secretary of State. "His Majesty's Government"—Mr Montagu was careful to involve the whole Cabinet—"think it is possible that the danger to the lives of Europeans and to the safety of British and Indian troops was greater than appears from the Committee's Report . . . in discharging this responsibility with the small force at his disposal, Brigadier-General Dyer naturally could not dismiss from his mind conditions in the Punjab generally, and he was entitled to lay his plans with reference to these conditions. But he was not entitled to select for condign punishment an unarmed crowd, which, when he inflicted that punishment, had committed no act of violence, had made no attempt to oppose him by force, and many members of which must have been unaware that they were disobeying his command."

The reader will note that several questions are begged in these sentences: a crowd which General Dyer had "assumed" to be armed is called without any evidence and against the probabilities "unarmed"; a part of that crowd "must have been unaware" of orders which had been proclaimed in nearly every part of the city that morning. Moreover, the Secretary of State went further in some other respects than the Committee. Whereas it had absolved General Dyer of any inhumanity in not attending to the wounded, on the ground that "he was acting with a very small force," Mr Montagu held, "that Brigadier-General Dyer should have taken no steps to see that some attempt was made to give some assistance to the dying and wounded was an omission in his obvious duty." But Mr Montagu did not rely on these and other incidents of the case. He condemned General Dyer upon principle :—

"The principle which has consistently governed the policy of His Majesty's Government in directing the methods to be employed when military action in support of the civil authority¹ is required may be broadly stated as the use of the minimum of force necessary. His Majesty's Government are determined that this principle shall remain the primary factor of policy whenever circumstances unfortunately necessitate the suppression of civil disorder by military force within the British Empire."

¹ Here again Mr Montagu begged the question. The civil authority at Amritsar (on 10th April) had informed the military that the situation was beyond civil control—had, in fact, abrogated. On the morning of 13th April (when Dyer took action), the Punjab Government had officially reported that Amritsar and Lahore were in a state of "open rebellion"; the Government of India upon that report issued its proclamation of the 14th declaring martial law.

It was General Dyer's chief offence that he had violated this principle—"the gravest feature of the case against Brigadier-General Dyer is his avowed conception of his duty in the circumstances which confronted him."

"That Brigadier-General Dyer," the Secretary of State went on, "displayed honesty of purpose and unflinching adherence to the conception of his duty cannot for a moment be questioned. But his conception of his duty in the circumstances in which he was placed was so fundamentally at variance with that which His Majesty's Government have a right to expect from, and a duty to enforce upon, officers who hold His Majesty's commission, that it is impossible to regard him as fitted to remain entrusted with the responsibilities which his rank and position impose upon him."

Here, then, is the issue stated, once more and more definitely. General Dyer is condemned for violating the principle of 'the minimum of force.'

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DEFENCE.

GENERAL DYER'S STATEMENT—THE PRINCIPLE OF MINIMUM FORCE—MATHEMATICAL CALCULATIONS—THE CABINET AND THE ARMY COUNCIL.

GENERAL DYER got leave of the Army Council to submit a written case on the 9th of June 1920 ; his reply was sent (from 33 Clarges Street) on the 3rd of July. It was done therefore in haste. The General, moreover, was sadly discommoded by the loss of his papers which had gone amissing on the death of Captain Briggs ; yet this letter to the War Office was so cogent, so logical, and so well supported by facts that His Majesty's Government found it extremely difficult to answer.¹

General Dyer argued that he had had no notice of any charges against him ; that on the contrary his official superiors had approved of his action ;

¹ " If he were the unaided author of this Report . . . he must be a very able man."—Lord Curzon in the House of Lords, 20th of July 1920. General Dyer—I make a present of the point to the admirers of Lord Curzon—was not unaided. He had learned discretion from experience, and had gone to an excellent firm of solicitors, Messrs Sharpe, Pritchard, & Company, who procured him the assistance of learned counsel, Messrs Reginald Hills and Austin Jones.

that he had given his evidence unrepresented and undefended, and in no sense expecting to find himself an accused person ; that he had no knowledge of the evidence of other witnesses and that no argument was addressed to the Committee on his behalf ; that while no member made himself his advocate, several acted as his prosecutors—a course which as lawyers they were well qualified to pursue ; that he had seen neither evidence nor findings “ until the recent publication of the Blue Book ” :—

“ The anomalous result has been that I saw then for the first time and all at once—charges, evidence, and findings.

It is clear that this procedure was not in accordance with the course of justice . . .

It will be equally obvious to the Army Council that the procedure was wholly irregular according to military law and custom.”¹

The Committee had not been constituted as a court for the trial of an individual ; it was moreover a civil committee, and General Dyer as an officer administering martial law during the rebellion should have been judged by a military tribunal. A military court of inquiry would have required his attendance throughout the proceedings, so as to give him full knowledge of any case which was being established against him and an opportunity of dealing with the charges suggested or the evidence adduced. In the case of a court-martial, definite charges would have been formulated in advance and opportunity given for the preparation of the

¹ Statement by Brigadier-General R. E. H. Dyer, C.B., and report of Captain F. C. Briggs, D.S.O. (Sharpe, Pritchard, & Company).

defence. These arguments must have made a strong appeal to the Military Members of the Army Council.

Then General Dyer turned to the principle of ‘ Minimum Force,’ upon which he had been condemned by the Secretary of State. He was well acquainted with that principle, and had at all times fully accepted it. He had even taught it when for five years he had held the staff appointment of Deputy-Assistant Adjutant-General for instruction in military law. He had it very clearly in his mind during the whole time he was in Amritsar, and never at any time failed to act up to it to the best of his judgment and capacity :—

“ I say with all sincerity that I acted upon this principle when firing upon the assembly at Amritsar on the 13th April, and according to the best of my judgment (and no one was in a better position to judge than myself) I used no more force than was required by the occasion.”

To make good this contention, General Dyer proceeded to describe the situation in which he found himself. It had been conveniently summarised for him by the Secretary of State :—

“ In Amritsar itself violence, murder, and arson of the most savage description had occurred three days previously, and the city was still practically in possession of the mob. From the surrounding countryside reports were hourly being received of violent similar outbreaks and attacks upon communications, and the deficiencies in these reports (due to successive attacks upon communications) were supplemented by rumours which there was very little means of verifying and as little ground for disbelieving.”¹

¹ Despatch, p. 24.

General Dyer went on to describe the measures he took to pacify the city by the display of his small force on the 11th and 12th of April, and to make his proclamations known. He quoted what the Hunter Committee had said of a similar order issued at Ahmedabad, that "the belief that all groups of more than ten men would be fired on without warning did much to restore order"; he argued that it had been met by a challenge which he could not ignore; that his position in the Bagh was "anxious," as he was "liable to be assailed from behind," and the extrication of his small force would have been impossible if the rebels had attacked after the firing; that hesitation would therefore have been "dangerous and futile," and that by taking the action he took he put an end to the rebellion.

Of the result, General Dyer quoted ample evidence, the testimony of Major-General Beynon and of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the evidence of Mr Miles Irving¹ and Lieutenant-Colonel Johnson²; he had even the opinion of the Government of India itself:—

"... we think that in the result his action at the time checked the spread of the disturbances to an extent which it is difficult now to estimate.

This was the opinion of many intelligent observers in the Punjab."

¹ Q. What was the result of this firing on that mob?

A. The whole rebellion collapsed. . . . 'Evidence,' vol. iii. p. 7.

² Lieutenant-Colonel Johnson, commanding the troops at Lahore, was asked how serious bloodshed was prevented at Lahore, and replied, "First of all about 60 per cent I put to General Dyer's action in Amritsar." Yet the fact that there was less bloodshed at Lahore than at Amritsar was used as evidence against General Dyer!

The Committee had even attempted the estimate which the Government of India found difficult :—

“ In the situation as it presented itself day by day to the Punjab Government there were grounds for the gravest anxiety. Within recent years there had been two revolutionary movements—*i.e.*, the Ghadr movement and the Silk Letter Conspiracy of 1916. It was difficult, probably unsafe, for the authorities not to assume that the outbreak was the result of a definite organisation. Apart from the existence of any deeply laid scheme to overthrow the British, a movement which had started in rioting and become a rebellion might have rapidly developed into a revolution.”¹

There was, in fact, as the Committee had said, “ open rebellion ”—“ The element of rebellion as distinct from mere riot on the one hand, and from political opposition to Government on the other, can be traced throughout.”² Was the suppression of that rebellion a proper object to pursue and to accomplish? If it was, what became of the Committee’s conclusion, that “ continued firing upon that crowd cannot be justified because of the effect such firing may have upon people in other places ”?—

“ The principle in the only sense in which it is relevant to or supports the criticism of my action comes to this—that my sole right was to secure the purely mechanical effect of causing the crowd to move off from the place where it was, and go resolved into its individual elements into some other place or places. What it might do wherever it or its elements went was no concern of mine. The fact that it might go off full of contempt and derision of my force to burn and loot elsewhere, or to surround and overwhelm my troops as they moved out of the city, was not to influ-

¹ Report, p. 63.

² *Ibid.*, p. 66.

ence my action at all. In fact none of the possible consequences of leniency were to be considered at all."

Then General Dyer proceeded to show from the Report of the Committee itself into what a morass of contradictions this finding led. Thus of the firing near the Hall Bridge on the 10th of April the Committee said: "It angered some, and as an incitement it might well be effective with others"; of the firing on the rioters at Niagram in the Ahmedabad district, "If greater force could have been applied at an early stage, the commission of an atrocious murder and much destruction of property might have been prevented"; of the failure to fire at Gujranwala, "If effective measures had then been taken to disperse the mob and restore order, the later incidents of the day might have been avoided"; of the firing at Delhi, it "continued no longer than was necessary to achieve the legitimate object of restoring order and preventing a disastrous outbreak of violence." In all these cases, then, the Committee had violated its own principle of merely moving on as applied to a rebellion. And the Secretary of State himself had effectually answered the Committee:—

"In discharging this responsibility with the small force at his disposal, Brigadier-General Dyer naturally could not dismiss from his mind conditions in the Punjab generally, and he was entitled to lay his plans with reference to those conditions."¹

And the Secretary of State's opinion was in accord with the 'Manual of Military Law' (chapter xiii.),

¹ Despatch, p. 24.

which distinguished clearly between: (1) Unlawful Assembly, (2) Riot, (3) Insurrection; and said of the last: "The existence of an armed insurrection would justify the use of any degree of force necessary effectually to meet and cope with the insurrection."

But the Secretary of State had himself gone further than the Committee: he had argued from the assumption that the soldier was merely "acting in support of civil authority" (which had admittedly vanished) and not quelling a rebellion (which on 13th April was officially admitted), had even suggested that there was an appropriate dose of force for every emergency which must be ascertained and applied. ". . . It is certain," says the Despatch, "that he (General Dyer) made no attempt to ascertain the minimum amount of force which he was compelled to employ, that the force which he actually employed was greatly in excess of that required to achieve the dispersal of the crowd, and that it resulted in lamentable and unnecessary loss of life and suffering." Thus the dose must be exquisitely estimated, not too large for actual results, not too small for possible contingencies, weighed out with one eye on what had occurred and with the other on what might happen:—

"Shed thou no blood; nor cut thou less nor more
But just a pound of flesh: if thou cutt'st more
Or less than a just pound, be it but so much,
As makes it light or heavy in the substance,
Or the division of the twentieth part
Of one poor scruple, nay, if the scale do turn
But in the estimation of a hair,
Thou diest, and all thy goods are confiscate."

We have seen that General Dyer was something of a mathematical genius ; but in the desperate heat of April in the Plains, with a hundred European women and children under a small guard in Amritsar Fort, with a panic-stricken civil population hanging round his neck and the smoke of the smouldering banks still in his nostrils, even he could hardly have been expected to make so nice a calculation.

If indeed he had been a prophet he might have drawn a comparison between the rebellion which he suppressed under the ' Manual of Military Law ' and the Moplah Rebellion of 1921, which was handled under the new rules laid down by the Government of India. The Punjab Rebellion was suppressed in a few weeks at a total cost of under 500 lives. In the Moplah Rebellion military commanders were instructed to show all possible leniency to the rebels. It went on for nearly a year. Thousands of Hindus were butchered by the fanatics with every circumstance of barbarity, and in the end 2000 Muhammadans were killed by the troops and 20,000 brought to trial, against 2500 in the Punjab.¹

It was thus that General Dyer summed up his reply to the main charge against him :—

- (1) That the object which I sought was a right object ;
- (2) That the force which I used was not excessive for the purpose ;
- (3) That, as the result showed, it did achieve the effect desired ;

and

- (4) That no less force on that occasion would have achieved that effect.

¹ ' India as I Knew It,' p. 306 *et seq.*

On the minor count, the General described the attempted murder of Miss Sherwood as "probably the most dastardly outrage in the whole rebellion." His order meant that the "street should be regarded as holy ground," and his object was "not merely to impress the inhabitants, but to appeal to their moral sense in a way which I knew they would understand . . . the order was to go on all fours in an attitude well understood by natives of India in relation to holy places." The General might have cited the precedent of the Saligarh Gate of the Delhi Fort Palace kept closed for half a century by the Government of India to remind the rebellious citizens of their cruelties in the Mutiny, or the Jama Masjid, occupied by troops after the fall of Delhi in September 1857, afterwards doomed to "remain under attachment for the present unoccupied," and not restored to the Muhammadans of Delhi until the 28th of November 1862. He contented himself with pleading that the little lane was only kept closed for a very short time, and affected only a few people, a "minor incident," an order "given when the feeling of horror was strong upon everybody," easily "misrepresented in quiet times by people at a great distance." As to the charge of neglecting the wounded brought by the Secretary of State, General Dyer pointed out that it had not been made either by the Hunter Committee or the Government of India, and for the excellent reason "that it was not possible for me to use my small and hard-worked force for this purpose," that he would not have been justified in taking such a risk; that "no (European) medical officer could

have lived in the city for an instant without a strong escort, and in my judgment none could be then spared," and that "the hospitals were open and the native medical officers were there."¹

Sir Henry Wilson, in his Diary for the 4th of July—he was then at Spa,—makes the following entry :—

"A wire from the War Office saying that an Army Council to-morrow to consider Dyer's case, and asking for my observations. I am replying that I have no observations, as I have not had time to read the papers. What a disgraceful rush the whole thing is, and purely political."²

We have seen what his brother Military Members thought in the matter. They were, however, put in a dilemma by the action of the Government in pre-judging a case which they had then to consider. It is evident, too, that the Secretary of State for War attempted to coerce them. "Winston hinted, and more," says Sir Henry Wilson, "at the difficulties which would arise if the Military Members differed from him and from the Cabinet." And Sir Henry's evidence is confirmed by Mr Churchill's own statement in the House of Commons. "The Cabinet," he said, "has many interests to consider far outside and beyond the authority of a body like the Army Council, which is . . . a subordinate body. . . . I made it perfectly clear to my colleagues on the Army Council that, in assenting to the conclusion to which they came as an Army

¹ He might have added that there were scores of Indian doctors in Amritsar, and that the main hospital was less than half a mile distant from the Bagh.

² Vol. ii. p. 249.

Council, I held myself perfectly free if I thought right, and if the Cabinet so decided, to make a further submission to the Crown for the retirement of General Dyer from the Army." ¹

In plain language Mr Churchill had said to the Military Members that in the last event he could coerce the King to dismiss General Dyer from the Army. The Military Members nevertheless stood firm at least upon this: If they could not acquit General Dyer of 'an error of judgment,' which was all that he had been accused of by the Hunter Committee, they would at least go no further; they refused to obey the behests of the Government to dismiss him from the Army; they merely accepted the position as it was left by the Commander-in-Chief in India. There, after all, it was not their province to interfere; for themselves they would do nothing. This was slurred over in the statement made to the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for War.² But it was made clear by Lord Milner, who represented the Government in the House of Lords. "What was it," said Lord Milner, "that the Army Council did in the circumstances? It was suggested to them that they should call upon him to retire, that he should be put on retired pay. He was not put on retired pay; he was not called upon to resign. That was the lightest penalty which the Army could put upon him. They did not inflict it upon him at all. The Army Council simply accepted the situation as they found it in

¹ 'Hansard,' 8th July 1920 (vol. cxxxI, col. 1724).

² *Ibid.*, 1414.

consequence of the action of the Commander-in-Chief in India in sending him home. They did nothing more to inflict any penalty upon him, and their action has been confirmed by the Government. That is the position to-day." ¹

¹ 20th July 1920. 'Hansard,' vol. xli. cols. 316-317.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

MR MONTAGU'S IGNORANCE OF TRADITION—THE ANARCHIST GROUP
—DIARCHY—THE SUPPRESSED VOLUME—MR CHURCHILL'S
VIEWS ON MINIMUM FORCE—THE BATTLE OF SIDNEY STREET
—ASQUITH AND BONAR LAW TO MR MONTAGU'S RESCUE.

GENERAL DYER, with the natural loyalty and frank open nature of the West Countryman, would never permit in his hearing any complaint either of his old friend the Commander-in-Chief in India or of the Secretary of State. The former, he used to say, was in a difficult position; the latter he called a very able man who did not know India. Mr Montagu is dead, and I do not propose to dispute the estimate. He was certainly an able man, and as certainly he failed either to understand or to sympathise with the great tradition on which India had been long and successfully governed. The British had come to rule less by deliberate intention than the necessities of the case. They went as traders; they found a state of anarchy, corruption, and perpetual war which made trade impossible. Their trading stations came to be forts, under the shelter of which commercial communities sprang up and flourished. These areas, like patches of healthy skin planted in a

diseased tissue, spread by reason of their strength and soundness until the factories became seats of government, and the scattered concessions a consolidated Empire.

Many disputed but most acquiesced in this gradual process which gave to India certain material benefits she despaired of finding under the decadent descendants of other alien conquerors and the princes, feudatories, and brigands who disputed the Mogul Dominion. As neither Muhammadans nor Hindus had ever been willing the one to tolerate the other, they inclined to accept a rule tolerant of both. The princes accepted treaties which confirmed them in their dignities and possessions; the brigands were either suppressed or driven into desert and mountain country, and the great mass of the people, the cultivators, rejoiced in their hearts to find rulers who gave them security in their lands and placed stern limits on the rapacity of those who had robbed and exploited them.

Thus the British founded themselves on a solid ground of material benefit and just administration, and so successful were they that for more than half a century they guided India with a silken thread. The Mutiny in their native armies taught them especially the value of the friendship of those fighting races which under Nicholson had saved them at Delhi, and whose loyalty in the Great War showed with what wisdom the policy had been calculated.

There was, however, always a minority which could not reconcile itself to the British system. The caste of Brahmin ministers and counsellors who

had secured a monopoly of rule in many parts of the crumbling Mogul Empire; the tax collectors and the money-lenders who were checked at every turn by the new administration; the *vakils* and pleaders who served those moneyed interests in the courts of law, and found their cunning curbed by British justice—all these formed a party linked together in common opposition under the organisation of the National Congress. It was one of the several mistakes of the British Government to establish a cheap system of Western education without any roots either in the native languages or literatures. Students, herded together at non-residential university colleges, were taught in an alien language a smattering of Occidental philosophies, and were turned out on a world which could offer them but little and poor employment to swell the hungry ranks of lawyers, journalists, and agitators. The main interest of this faction was to obtain more place and power in the ranks of the various Government services, and as their demands could not be granted without injury to every Indian interest, they were the fiercest critics of those who stood in their way, and behind and beneath all this mass of discontent were the secret organisations of anarchy and crime already noticed.

It was no doubt in ignorance that Mr Montagu placed himself in the power of this faction. He came of a Jewish family of enormous wealth and great influence with the Liberal Party. As Parliamentary Secretary to Mr Asquith from 1906 to 1910, he was nurtured in Liberal principles and marked for rapid promotion. From 1910 to 1914 he was

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India¹; he was Financial Secretary to the Treasury when Mr Asquith fell in 1916, and he indignantly accompanied his chief into retirement. But Mr Lloyd George, who engineered that fall, set himself to detach Mr Asquith's adherents, and offered Mr Montagu the great office of Secretary of State for India, which he accepted in 1917. The nation at that time being deep in war had little leisure to consider the principles of our Indian Government, the whole system of which Mr Montagu set himself to reform. With that end in view he went to India in the cold weather of 1917, and found that the only people who took any interest in his design were the politicians of the National Congress and some disaffected Muhammadans who had formed a Muslim League. "Now and again," says Sir Michael O'Dwyer, "Heads of Provinces were called away from the pressing duties of administration and the then all-important task of raising man-power for the Army, to assist in the discussions. Most of us thought that the occasion was singularly ill-chosen, and grudged the call on our time."² If Mr Montagu heard these harassed experts, he certainly did not heed their advice.

Some little time before, as it happened, Mr Lionel Curtis, an enthusiastic constitution-monger, had gone

¹ During that time the family firm of Samuel Montagu & Co. received a contract to buy silver for the Indian Mint, a circumstance which excited some scandal; but as Mr Montagu was not a member of the firm, and did not benefit by the contract, he was found to have departed in no way from the high code so strictly observed by his colleagues. A criticism of more substance was that he ignorantly condemned (in a speech) our system of government in India, thereby vastly encouraging its enemies.

² 'India as I Knew It,' p. 377.

to India on his own account, and was addressing a series of 'Open Letters' to its 'People' on the system of government appropriate to their needs. He belonged to that high-minded order of people predestined to be the dupes of designing men, and being the most ingenious inventor of formulas for reconciling irreconcilables since Athanasius, was just the man to help Mr Montagu. Thus was invented the system called Diarchy, shortly described in that divine warning, a house divided against itself cannot stand. The British in India were to retain some departments of State; the elected members of the "politically-minded class" were to take over others. As for the masses of the people, the authors of the scheme sorrowfully admitted that they were unfit to understand it, but hoped that the turmoil of its working might eventually stir them out of their placid pathetic contentment.

One practical effect of this policy was to put the Secretary of State in the hands of the National Congress Party, since only they had any aptitude for Western politics. When, therefore, that Party was found to be deep in the rebellion of 1919, Mr Montagu was placed in this dilemma: if he told the truth about the rebels he could hardly recommend his reforms to the House of Commons; if he took their side he must throw over the officials who had suppressed the rebellion.

Thus began that tortuous course which involved the ruin of General Dyer as one of its minor consequences. The House of Commons was kept in ignorance; the Government of India, which had justified General Dyer in public debate, was induced

to change its attitude, and Mr Montagu himself reconciled his former with his latter position by suggesting that he had been kept in ignorance. Thus on the 16th of December 1919, he told the House of Commons that he knew no details of the circumstances until he saw a report in the Press,¹ and on the 23rd June 1920 he added, "These things came to me as a shock when I read them in the newspapers."

By such concealments and evasions Mr Montagu contrived to get his Bill through the House of Commons; but he put a heavy strain upon the loyalty both of his colleagues and of the Conservative side of the Coalition. As early as the 25th of July 1918, Lord Curzon had written to him, "You have naturally in view in your mind, not merely your own hopes and aspirations, but a House of Commons predisposed to advance proposals which there are probably not a dozen men in that House who are really qualified to understand. I am made more and more uncomfortable as successive steps are taken or proposed which appear to cut away foot by foot the somewhat precarious ground on which I stand."² The House of Commons was much less 'predisposed' in 1920 than in 1918, since the policy of the Coalition in Ireland and in Russia, as well as in India, had brought a large number of Conservatives almost to the point of breaking away. As it was now to be asked to support the censure of a soldier who had suppressed a rebellion and had been

¹ 'Hansard,' vol. cxxiii. col. 241.

² 'Life of Lord Curzon,' by the Earl of Ronaldshay, vol. iii. p. 172. See also Lord Sydenham's speech in the House of Lords on 6th August 1918, afterwards published in his 'Studies of an Imperialist,' pressing for certain crucial papers which were refused.

promoted thereafter, Mr Montagu had good reason to fear the event of the debate.

Thus the Secretary of State was tempted to keep the truth from the House of Commons. We have already seen from Sir Henry Wilson's Diary how Mr Churchill tried to delay General Dyer's defence until after the debate, and how Mr Montagu opposed himself to this manœuvre. It would seem nevertheless from the following facts that he himself kept the evidence from Parliament. The Report of the Hunter Committee was published on the 27th of May, and on the 7th of July (the day before the debate) Mr Rupert Gwynne complained that he had applied twice to the Vote Office without result for a copy of the evidence. "Nobody," replied Mr Montagu, "can regret more than I do the misfortune of the Hon. Member." He would see that he got a copy that afternoon. There were, he thought, five volumes, and if he printed and distributed them all to every member, he would be accused of unnecessary expenditure. Now, as a fact, there were not five but six volumes, and the sixth was never disclosed to the House of Commons. It contained the evidence most important to the vindication of General Dyer—that is to say, of the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab and the Chief Secretary to that Government, who had been heard *in camera*, and the evidence also of a great Punjab notable, Sir Umar Hayat Khan, who had exposed the conspiracy both in the Punjab and on the Frontier, and had blamed Sir Michael O'Dwyer for being too lenient with the conspirators. It contained besides a narrative of events prepared by the Punjab Government, a great

mass of evidence against Gandhi and his fellow-conspirators, and a record of the many attempts to spread sedition in the Indian Army.

Of all this and much more the House of Commons was ignorant when it met in Committee of Supply to discuss the Dyer case on the 8th of July 1920. It was nevertheless suspicious, nor was it reassured by the tone and temper of Mr Montagu's speech. The Secretary of State entered at once upon an attack on General Dyer which went far beyond anything alleged either by the Majority or by the Minority of the Hunter Committee. After describing General Dyer's explanation of his motive as "the doctrine of terrorism," he proceeded :—

"If you agree to that, you justify everything that General Dyer did. Once you are entitled to have regard neither to the intentions nor to the conduct of a particular gathering, and to shoot and to go on shooting, with all the horrors that were here involved, in order to teach somebody else a lesson, you are embarking upon terrorism, to which there is no end. I say, further, that when you pass an order that all Indians, whoever they may be, must crawl past a particular place; when you pass an order to say that all Indians, whoever they may be, must forcibly or voluntarily salaam any officer of His Majesty the King, you are enforcing racial humiliation. I say, thirdly, that when you take selected schoolboys from a school, guilty or innocent, and whip them publicly; when you put up a triangle, where an outrage which we all deplore and which all India deplores has taken place, and whip people who have not been convicted; when you flog a wedding party, you are indulging in frightfulness, and there is no other adequate word which could describe it."

As most of these charges had never so much as been made against General Dyer, neither can his

biographer, without departing from his rule of moderation, find any other adequate word to describe them.¹

Although the Committee had been denied the means of checking such misstatements of fact, it so much resented the railing tone of the Secretary of State that Mr Churchill was almost immediately put up to correct the impression. The Secretary of State for War was more tactful but hardly more candid. After all, he argued, all that had been done to General Dyer was to remove him from his appointment, and "during the war," as every member of the Committee knew, "hundreds and probably thousands of officers had been so dealt with by their superiors." There were far worse punishments that might have been imposed—"cashiering, imprisonment, or the death penalty" among them—but, of course, in such cases a soldier would be entitled to the procedure of British justice. Even as it was, the Army Council was not content with the verdict of the Hunter Committee. The first step it took was to direct General Dyer to submit a statement of his case for their consideration, and it was upon that statement of his case that the Army Council had come to its unanimous conclusion. The Government had accepted the verdict of the Army Council, although it might have gone further, in view of the "monstrous event" of the Jallianwala Bagh.

Then Mr Churchill went on to consider that event. Was the crowd attacking? Was the crowd armed?

¹ Mr Montagu had been fully informed of the facts by Sir Michael O'Dwyer at the India Office in 1919, and later by Sir William Beynon, who gave the Secretary of State a full account of Amritsar in the course of a personal interview in May 1920.

The crowd was not attacking; it was unarmed, at least with "lethal weapons"; "except with bludgeons." The exception, when a crowd of many thousands is opposed by ninety men, fifty of them armed with rifles, might be thought important, but Mr Churchill brushed it aside. To put these questions, then, and to find the right answer, "These are simple tests which it is not too much to expect officers in these difficult situations to apply." Then there was the doctrine of the 'minimum of force,' to which Mr Churchill paid a long and elaborate eulogy. If our soldiers had been not merely merciful but kind to prisoners under the dreadful conditions of war, how much more should they exercise restraint in "civil riots, when the danger is incomparably less." "Frightfulness is not a remedy known to the British pharmacopœia," and it was of 'frightfulness' that General Dyer had been guilty. As for India, it had been in no danger, nor did it require such methods to save it. "We had plenty of force, if force were all that was needed"; but there were better ways, and here Mr Churchill drew a touching picture of his colleague, Mr Montagu: "I was astonished by my Rt. Hon. friend's sense of detachment when, in the supreme crisis of the war, he calmly journeyed to India, and remained for many months absorbed and buried in Indian affairs." It was such services as these that would "ever ally and bind together the British and Indian peoples."

Here again the biographer may be excused for not applying the 'adequate word.' And yet, example being better than precept, there is one case from Mr Churchill's own practice which might be

used to illustrate his preaching. He himself, when he was Home Secretary, had an excellent opportunity for applying the 'simple' and 'humane' doctrine "that no more force should be used than is necessary to secure compliance with the law." It happened that on the 3rd January 1911, two desperadoes, who had taken refuge in a house in the East End of London, fired promiscuously with Mauser pistols, first at the police who tried to arrest them, and then at any one who came along the street. From the ample Press accounts of what is known as the battle of Sidney Street, we gather that Mr Churchill arrived about 11.30 A.M. and took charge of the operations. He had as his General Staff the Assistant Commissioner of Metropolitan Police, the Commissioner of City Police, the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department, the Chief Constable of the Metropolitan Police, and Mr Blackwell of the Home Office. His forces consisted of from 1000 to 1500 police partly armed with shot-guns and revolvers; 90 men with rifles and a machine-gun of the Scots Guards; a section of Horse Artillery with one field gun, and a strong reserve of the London Fire Brigade. There was no reading of the Riot Act. Mr Churchill proceeded at once to the use of what might be called the maximum of force. "It is some time," says one admiring account, "since the Home Secretary was under fire, but his old military capacity had not deserted him. He was full of resourceful suggestions. His first suggestion was that metal shields should be improvised to enable the police to approach the building. Then the astonishing

suggestion was made that a cannon should be brought to blow in the front of the building. A telephone message was sent to St John's Wood Barracks."¹ The gun, fortunately for everything in the proposed line of fire, arrived too late to be brought into action;² but in the meantime there was rapid practice, controlled or uncontrolled, from shot-guns, revolvers, and rifles. In the end the building was set on fire. Whether this was done by the attack or the defence remains in some dispute. I am told by a reliable eye-witness that he actually saw the place being set alight; but an official statement issued next day denied the report "that the house in Sidney Street was fired by order of the Home Secretary." It was added, however, that if there had been "the choice between smoking out the fugitives and unnecessarily risking the lives of police officers, there would have been no hesitation in adopting the former course."³ It is at any rate certain from the reports that the fire engines were not allowed to put out the fire until after the roof had collapsed and the garrison had been burnt to death. Now I do not venture to censure these methods. On the contrary, I am prepared to admit that the man on the spot is the best judge of the military necessities; but I may at least point out that Mr Churchill was operating in a friendly and peaceful city, that his communications were not cut, that his forces were in a ratio not of one to some

¹ 'Times,' 4th January 1911.

² "If the road had not been so narrow, the machine-guns and the armoured cars would have joined in."—Mr Churchill on the Dyer case ('Hansard,' vol. cxxxi. col. 1730).

³ 'Times,' 4th January 1911.

hundreds, but of some hundreds to one, and that the action ended in the destruction of 100 per cent of the enemy forces in a manner which the unfriendly critic might be tempted to describe as 'frightfulness.'

But to return to the discussion. Mr Asquith, who had set it going, was evidently disarmed by the Government's line of defence. He had not perhaps expected so complete a surrender of a Government servant. He added, however, his mite to the growing heap of misstatements of fact. He was prepared to admit that there had been a "very serious riot at Amritsar on the 10th of April 1919; but it had been 'put down,' and the 11th and 12th had passed in perfect tranquillity or, at any rate, there was no further offensive." Now there was, in fact, as the Report of the Hunter Committee shows, the same sort of tranquillity in Amritsar city between the 10th and the 13th April as a policeman might observe through a chink in the shutters of a burgled house, when the citizen lies in a pool of blood on the floor and the burglars are packing up the spoils. The rebellion in the city had never been 'put down'; the mob ruled the city; its roughs paraded the streets armed with *lathis*; its shopkeepers were not allowed to do business, and by universal testimony it would have been death for any unarmed European to enter its gates. The Punjab Government had reported "open rebellion" in Amritsar on the 13th April; the Government of India had proclaimed it on the 14th April. Then Mr Asquith proceeded:—

"As my Rt. Hon. friend has just pointed out, it was a meeting of unarmed persons. I think that I am right in

saying that there were women and children there as well as men. (Hon. Members : 'No.')

Sir W. Joynson-Hicks : There were no women or children.

Mr Asquith : Be it so. I believe that there were boys, but be it so."

Once more the judicious historian denies himself the satisfaction of the 'adequate word.'

There were not wanting defenders of General Dyer. Sir Edward Carson, although he had not been allowed the full record of the evidence, made a strong appeal on the fundamental question, "Had he ever had a fair trial?" Could they expect officers to do their duty in difficult circumstances if they were thus to be denied justice? "Do not let them suppose that if they do their best, unless on some very grave consideration of dereliction of duty, that they will be made scapegoats of and be thrown to the wolves to satisfy an agitation such as that which arose after this incident." And Sir Edward reminded the Committee that what General Dyer faced was part of the conspiracy to drive the British out of India and out of Egypt: "It is all one conspiracy, it is all engineered in the same way, it all has the same object—to destroy our sea power and drive us out of Asia." Sir William Joynson-Hicks, who had been to India some little time before on a visit, gave the Committee a faithful account of the facts of the case; Mr Rupert Gwynne accused the Secretary of State of keeping the facts from the House of Commons for his own political purposes and of reversing the original decision of the Government of India as stated by Sir Havelock Hudson and Sir William Vincent in the Legislative Assembly.

"The Hon. Member," said Mr Montagu in a passion, "has made many foul charges against me which are not supported by the facts."

"They are foul charges," retorted Mr Gwynne, "when made against a civilian, but not when they are made against a soldier."

The discussion was thought to be going so badly for the Government that Mr Bonar Law was put up to rally the Conservative side to the support of the Coalition. He made a moderating speech. He allowed for the difficulties of General Dyer. He admitted "that every appearance justified the General in thinking that the same outrages which occurred before might occur at any moment." The meeting had been held in defiance of his proclamation. There was a great deal to be said for the soldier. It was very difficult to draw the line. Nevertheless, when General Dyer said in his "very able defence," "If I had been thinking of myself, of my own protection, then I would have given notice," he was admitting that notice ought to have been given. He should have thought of the moral position of the Government. Everybody in authority was agreed that his action should be repudiated. The Government had tried to feel 'fairly and justly'; but they had to think "not only of public opinion here, but in India as well." They must do nothing to give ground to the charge that they were treating Indians less fairly than other British subjects.

This speech, with its disarming tone of moderation, its depressing note of finality, closed the discussion; on Sir Edward Carson's motion, there were 129 votes for General Dyer and 230 against. General

Dyer, who looked moodily down from the gallery, may or may not have understood how little the merits of the case entered into the decision; Mrs Dyer, who sat with Lady Carson, wept a good deal at the cruel abuse of her husband. "Never mind," said her cheerful companion, "they call Edward much worse things."

CHAPTER XXVI.

JUSTICE.

AN EMPIRE TRIBUTE TO GENERAL DYER—LORD SUMNER AND LORD FINLAY—A GREAT VINDICATION—SIR SANKARAN NAIR'S LIBEL AND ITS RESULT—MR JUSTICE M'CARDIE SAYS THE LAST WORD—MR MACDONALD'S FUTILE ATTACK ON THE BENCH—DEATH OF GENERAL DYER.

THERE was a great deal of kindness and sympathy to console General Dyer, messages and letters of condolence and support from many loyal Indians and from Englishmen all over the world, but especially from India. He could not have supported the expenses of his case but for the kind thought of that good friend of the British Army and staunch Englishman, Mr H. A. Gwynne, the editor of the 'Morning Post,' who opened a subscription on his behalf. The Countess Bathurst headed a list which grew to such proportions that it became an anxiety to the newspaper. It could not be stopped. Money rolled in from everywhere. In India the 'Pioneer' co-operated; and although the Indian Government, with a touch of meanness, forbade its officers to subscribe to a fund which was in the nature of a rebuke, those who were forbidden sent subscriptions by stealth. I have gone over the list of the subscribers. It includes every rank and station

of life : private soldiers sent their shillings ; officers' widows contributed a ring or a bangle to be turned into money. Contributions continued to flow in long after the list was closed, and in all a sum of about £28,000 was handed to General Dyer.

Then on the 19th and 20th of July 1920 there was the vindication in the House of Lords. On the motion of Viscount Finlay, and by a majority of 129 to 86, that House "deplored the conduct of the case of General Dyer as unjust to that officer, and as establishing a precedent dangerous to the preservation of order in face of rebellion." The House of Lords is better informed, more judicial, and less partial than the House of Commons ; it is less impressed by oratory, and gives more weight to facts ; it has a higher tradition in all matters of Government, and pays less attention to popular clamour. Upon that occasion the speeches which weighed with it most were made by two great judges, Lord Finlay and Lord Sumner, whose keen and practised minds pierced to the heart of the matter. Were these 'disturbances' a mere 'civil riot,' as Lord Birkenhead represented them to be, or an open rebellion. If they were, as the Government of India and the Secretary of State admitted, a rebellion, "They would have to consider," said Lord Sumner, "whether they were prepared to lay down as a rule to be observed in all cases that rebels are, like dogs, to be allowed to have a first bite ; that rebels are to be dispersed, but are not to be dealt with more severely than by dispersal." And Lord Sumner tested the treatment of General Dyer by the elements of British justice. After

deprecating the practice of appointing a Committee of Inquiry, upon which persons sat whose views were already known and whose minds were already made up, Lord Sumner proceeded:—

“ If General Dyer had been tried—tried in any form that you like, such as enables a man to have it called a trial—he would have been entitled to have a definite charge formulated against him in writing before the Inquiry began so far as it related to him; he would have been entitled to know what the charge was; he would have been entitled to know who was to be called against him; he would have been entitled to cross-examine those persons and to call witnesses to answer them; he would have been entitled to be represented; he would have been entitled to be present at every stage of the hearing, and he would have been entitled, if he chose, to offer himself as a witness, with the protection of advisers if he gave evidence, not in the capacity of a person charged, but in the capacity of a person who, as an Officer of the Government, was bound to give an account of his doings. He would have been entitled then to be warned that there were certain questions that he need not answer. . . . Of all those things he was—I will not say deprived, because I am not suggesting that there was any trickery here, but by the course of events . . . he was heard without any of these protections. . . . ”

Lord Sumner's and Lord Finlay's speeches were not merely a vindication of General Dyer: they were a vindication of justice, which is the foundation of Government.

If General Dyer had been in good health, these consolations might have restored his natural cheerfulness, although in any case he must have suffered greatly in spirit and in the interests of life, since India and the Army filled almost the whole of his horizon. As it was, he fell into a state of despond-

ency from which it was difficult to rouse him. He went first to Harrogate for treatment, and then, as Sir Geoffrey Barton had offered him his house at Dumfries, to Scotland for a while. Then the Dyers went to live in Gloucestershire at the farm of Ashton Fields, which they had bought for their son Geoffrey. He tried to resume work on the range-finder, to which he had looked forward as an occupation of his retirement ; but in vain : the facility had gone, his head ached from the mathematical calculations in which he had formerly delighted. He laid the mechanism aside unfinished and for ever.

The disease from which General Dyer suffered was arterial sclerosis, something too deep for cure. In November 1921 he was struck down by a stroke of paralysis, followed by thrombosis, and suffered greatly from weakness and depression. The circle of his life narrowed. All exciting news had to be kept from him, and so it happened that he did not hear of the last and signal vindication until after the case was over.

It came from the impartial hands and even scales of an English Court of Justice, in a manner to suggest the final triumph of truth in the affairs of man. Sir Michael O'Dwyer had not himself escaped censure, but had been blamed by the Government of India for those words of approval which he sent through General Beynon at Lahore to the Brigadier at Amritsar. In his retirement he had, besides, the mortification of seeing not only General Dyer but many other officers and officials suffer for their zeal in suppressing the rebellion. The enemy was everywhere truculent and triumphant. Under Mr

Montagu's reforms he swarmed into office, and made his resentment felt so far that the 'moderate' and even the loyal Indian was either silenced or thought it prudent to temporise.

In such difficult times we might even applaud Sir Sankaran Nair for writing his book, 'Gandhi and Anarchy.'¹ The author had been a judge in the Madras High Court and a member of the Government of India. As such he had agreed to the imposition of martial law in April 1919, but had resigned in July of that year, either because he feared the growing strength of the opposition, or because he disapproved of the administration of martial law. Whatever his motive, he had a bitter experience of the results of that seditious agitation which Gandhi supported in the Moplah Rebellion, when many of his friends and fellow Hindus were forcibly circumcised and sometimes skinned alive by Muslim fanatics.² The book was written to

¹ The first edition was published early in 1922 at the Indore State Press; it was altered in several important respects in subsequent editions.

² "More than 2000 Muhammadans killed by troops, according to official estimate, thousands more in other ways, larger numbers wounded; the number of Hindus butchered in circumstances of barbarity, skinned alive, made to dig their own graves before slaughter, running into thousands; women and (*purda*) women too, raped, not in a fit of passion, but systematically, and with calculated, revolting, and horrible cruelty for which I have not been able to find a parallel in history. Thousands of Hindus were forcibly converted . . . all this due directly to the visit of Gandhi and Shaukat Ali and to the organisation of Khilafat associations. . . . The Government of Madras was prevented from interfering with Khilafat agitators by the Government of India, who were therefore as responsible as if they had ordered all this frightfulness."—'Gandhi and Anarchy,' p. 88.

It is worth noting that Dr Muhammad Bashir, alleged to have been present at the attack on the National Bank when its manager was murdered and to have organised the Jallianwala Bagh meeting, was pardoned by the Government of India (after being condemned and sentenced to death) in time to take a share in this Khilafat agitation.

denounce these atrocities; but to balance these censures of Gandhi and the anarchists, Sir Sankaran committed a libel on Sir Michael O'Dwyer: "Before the reform it was in the power of the Lieutenant-Governor, a single individual, to commit the atrocities in the Punjab we know only too well."

Sir Michael O'Dwyer had no doubt waited and hoped for such an opportunity to vindicate himself and his officers. The libel case of *O'Dwyer v. Nair* came before Mr Justice M'Cardie and a special jury in the King's Bench on the 30th of April 1924, and lasted almost five weeks. The defendants made the plea of justification, and relied on the shooting at Amritsar to prove their case. Thus the conduct of General Dyer became the chief issue, as is clearly shown in the particulars of justification.¹

Now these issues had not as yet been settled according to the established principles of English law. The Hunter Committee, as Lord Finlay and Lord Sumner had forcibly demonstrated, was not a Court of Justice; its Report and the Despatches of the Government of India and the Secretary of State were documents to be considered, but not findings to be accepted by an English judge and jury. If they were, then England would not be a free country, since justice would lie at the mercy of the Executive, since a mere act of the Executive would then bind a Court of Law.² The pleadings

¹ (1) That on 13th April 1919 General Dyer committed an atrocity by ordering the shooting at Amritsar. (2) That the plaintiff caused or was responsible for the commission of that alleged atrocity.

² For an admirable statement of the whole case from the constitutional point of view, see "The Executive and the Judiciary," by Sir Lynden Macassey, K.C., LL.D., 'National Review,' April 1926.

of the case made it the clear duty of the judge and jury to consider the case anew and independently of such injudicial findings. Sir Walter Schwabe, counsel for Sir S. Nair, raised the issue in these words: "One of the questions which will have to be considered is whether the condemnation of General Dyer was right or wrong. Many facts are available now which were not available before."

Thus, although General Dyer did not know it, his case was for the first time fairly tried, and by the best of all tribunals, an English judge and jury. And thus it came about that many of those whom we already know—Lord Chelmsford, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, General Beynon, Colonel Frank Johnson, Mr Kitchin, "Jullundur" Smith, and a score or so of others concerned in the rebellion—appeared in the witness-box, while the evidence of many more was taken in India and laid before the court. In all, there were 125 witnesses, of whom the great majority were Indian.

Now a judge sitting with a jury is entitled, and often is in duty bound, to express his opinion on the facts of the case, provided that he leaves the issues of fact to the jury to determine. Thus we find in the summing up of Mr Justice M'Cardie,¹ the only impartial and authoritative judgment on the case of General Dyer.

There is a pleasure in watching the intellectual processes of an English judge. His mind seems to

¹ On the 4th and 5th of June 1924. It occupied more than five hours and fills 120 pages of the shorthand notes, 30 of which are devoted to the conduct of General Dyer.

pierce the heart of a subject like a bright sword. Take, for example, this sentence :—

“ And the word ‘ atrocity ’ in this case has to be considered in connection with what I regard as the supreme duty of every Government, be it in England or be it in India or be it elsewhere, to maintain order and to repress anarchy. That is the first duty of Government, for without the enforcement of law, there can be no good thing for the people.”

From such foundations the judge proceeded to his review of the case. He described the circumstances in which General Dyer found himself. He reminded the jury of the atrocities of the 10th. The mob afterwards was quiet, no doubt, “ but the mob was in possession of the city.” He described the crowd at the meeting—it had been put by a witness for the defence at 20,000 ; he faced the tragedy of the shooting : “ There upon the ground at the end lay the heaps of wounded and dead . . . a very, very tragic episode.” He passed from the ‘ resolutions ’ proposed to the meeting, which signified little ; to the character of the men who addressed it, which signified much ; he pointed out that of the eight, no less than five were implicated in the murder of the bank managers ; he weighed the evidence of rebellion and conspiracy ; he pointed at the attempts to seduce Indian troops ; he asked the jury to look at the map of Northern India and study the Punjab Rebellion in its relation to the Afghan War ; he quoted the evidence of General Beynon to show the significance of the lines of communication. He then asked a question, what would have happened

if General Dyer and his force had been destroyed ? “Rebellions lead to insurrection ; insurrection leads to civil war ; civil war is a terrible thing ; and in this case, dealing, as we are, with matters of high policy, you have only to remember that grave evils may sometimes demand grave remedies.” He referred to the universal tributes to the high character and honesty of purpose of General Dyer ; he noted how his action had been regarded with complete approval by the leaders and priests of the Sikh community. And then—

“ . . . speaking with full deliberation and knowing the whole of the evidence given in this case, I express my view that General Dyer under the grave and exceptional circumstances acted rightly, and in my opinion upon this evidence he was wrongly punished by the Secretary of State for India. That is my view, and I need scarcely say that I have weighed every circumstance, every new detail that was not before the Hunter Committee . . . ”

Such was the opinion of this English judge, and when the questions were put to the jury : “ First, whether General Dyer’s conduct was an atrocity ; and secondly, if yes, was the plaintiff responsible for that atrocity ? ” it found by a majority of 11 to 1 that General Dyer’s conduct was not an atrocity ; and it found for the plaintiff on all points. This judgment was accepted by the defendant, nor was it disputed in any Court of Appeal.

It was, however, disputed by the Government of the day. In the House of Commons the Socialist Party had been among the most bitter in their attacks both on Sir Michael O’Dwyer and General Dyer, and in 1924, when the judgment was delivered,

a Socialist Government was in office. A British General had already been thrown to the Indian agitators by one British administration ; it remained for another to offer up a British judge. Fortunately, precautions had long before been taken to defend the integrity and independence of British justice from the encroachments of the Crown, and the Executive could not touch Mr Justice M'Cardie. But the Government did what it could. On the 23rd of June 1924, Mr Ramsay MacDonald, then Prime Minister, rebuked the judge from the Treasury Bench for " the harm that was being done in India by the words complained of " (by Mr Lansbury).

" However unfortunate the words have been," continued the Prime Minister, " they clearly do not constitute the kind of fault amounting to a moral delinquency which constitutionally justifies an address as proposed. It ought in fairness to be borne in mind that the objectionable passages occurred not in a considered written judgment, but in an oral charge to a Jury delivered at the conclusion of a lengthened and somewhat heated trial, and the very form in which it was couched shows that the learned Judge was not informed as to what took place."

His Majesty's Government, so Mr Ramsay MacDonald continued, associated itself with the decision of its predecessors. It would always uphold the right of the Judiciary to pass judgment even on the Executive ; but " it is all the more necessary that it should guard itself against pronouncements upon issues involving grave political consequences which are not themselves being tried.¹ And a little later Mr MacDonald described the judge's finding on

¹ H.C. 175. Deb. 5. s. 7.

General Dyer as an *obiter dictum* unconcerned with the "main point and purpose of the trial," and "calculated to have a very serious effect upon Indian public opinion."¹

To say that Mr Justice M'Cardie 'calculated' such an effect was probably an assault rather upon the King's English than on the King's Bench. Mr Justice M'Cardie obviously made no such calculation. He was concerned only to do justice, even if the heavens should fall. But there are, besides, in this passage two misstatements of fact. As we have seen, the learned judge was informed of what took place by the witnesses on both sides of the case; and as the defendant had based his defence on the action of General Dyer, and Sir Michael O'Dwyer's approval of it, that issue was itself being tried, was a main point of the trial, and could not be avoided by the judge. The fact that Mr Ramsay MacDonald's Attorney-General and legal adviser was no other than Sir Patrick Hastings, K.C., who had at an early stage of the case been counsel for the defendant, makes the misstatements the more inexcusable.

We may agree with Lord Cave when he said of these strictures that "the pulse of a judge never beat any faster because of any criticism directed against his judgments,"² and yet feel the ignominy of this attack on British justice to placate Indian agitation.

¹ The attack did not end here. Lord Olivier, then Secretary of State for India, in a despatch to the Governor-General dated 17th July 1924, drew attention to the judgment and the Prime Minister's remarks, and added that "all the materials were not available to the Court," implying another censure on British justice.

² At the Mansion House on 4th July 1924.

When the case was over, Mrs Dyer was allowed by the doctor to tell her husband the result. It greatly consoled him, but an incurable illness took its inevitable course. In 1926 they moved to an old house called St Martin's, near the village of Long Ashton, in the neighbourhood of Bristol. There until near the end the General was able to hobble round his garden on a stick, but spent most of his time in a chair. His mind was clear. He enjoyed reading and the visits of his children and his grandchildren. He failed very slowly, until on the 11th July 1927 a severe stroke left him helpless, and on Saturday, the 23rd, he died, consoled to his last moments by his wife's loving care.¹

¹ After a service at All Saints' Church, Long Ashton, the body was brought to London and given a military funeral; the gun-carriage on which it lay (covered with the Union Jack which had flown at his headquarters) was followed by a great company of comrades and other mourners to St Martin's-in-the-Fields. There another service was held, and then at Golder's Green the body was committed to the flames.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CONCLUSION.

A BORN SOLDIER—MEMORABLE SERVICES—THE FRUSTRATION OF
A GREAT CONSPIRACY—AN ARCHBISHOP'S TESTIMONY—THE
CHARACTER OF DYER—THE DEVOTION OF HIS TROOPS—THE
HOMAGE OF THE SIKHS—GOVERNMENT DISINGENUOUSNESS—
THE MUTILATED VOLUME—A VAIN APPEAL—THE RAINBOW.

THE life of General Dyer being ended, there should be nothing to do but write *Finis* on the last page. The reader who is content with the story may close the book now, and admit (I hope) that he has had his pennyworth—

"Of most disastrous chances,
 Of moving accidents by flood and field,
 Of hair-breadth 'scapes i' the imminent deadly breach,
 of antres vast and deserts idle,
 Rough quarries, rocks and hills whose heads touch heaven,"

and much else that may at least have pleased the heart of youth which still loves courage in adventure, and has no prejudgments to qualify its admiration. After all, it seems only fair that there should be some sympathy on the one side where there has been so much prejudice on the other. I can say at least that if any find his judgment altered by the perusal, it has been done by the facts alone. I have neither altered nor suppressed the evidence: knowing how

dearly Dyer loved the truth, I have set it down as far as it could be ascertained. "This only is the witchcraft I have used."

The organised attempt to turn the British lion into a sheep has not so far succeeded that the qualities of courage and resolution are no longer to be admired. Here at least was a man, an Englishman, a soldier. His comrades assert of him that he was a born leader of men, a military genius. Those who served with him in the Sarhad consider that campaign to be a little masterpiece of its own kind, and his march in relief of Thal, when he went like an arrow from a bow, like a bullet from a gun, at the heart of the enemy, is better known and no less admired among soldiers. These campaigns, moreover, are of some consequence in themselves, since they concerned the safety of India. In the one General Dyer effectually corked a bottle from which a truly formidable genie was emerging; and in the other he stopped an advance by Nadir Khan which threatened not merely Parachinar, Thal, and Kohat, but the whole frontier, which awaited the decision, the Indus and the Plains.

The British public has been allowed to hear very little of that third war with Afghanistan, in which no less than 340,000 men crossed the Indus to defend India. It would no doubt have been inconvenient to the Coalition Government had it been known that Moscow was concerned in the attack, and especially inconvenient to Mr Montagu had the House of Commons or the British public understood the close connection between Amritsar and Peshawar, between Peshawar and Kabul. It would, besides,

have been difficult to find any creditable reason for the political interference in the course of that campaign when our victorious armies were kept for months on the passes of the Pamirs and the Hindu Kush, while our agents negotiated with an enemy who lay at their mercy and who used the time thus given to incite the tribes to ambush convoys and massacre isolated garrisons. There is no dispute here as to the facts ; the truth is ingenuously revealed by the Commander-in-Chief, who does not appear even to realise the shame of the story he tells. How the Afghan armies were defeated by General Barrett on the Khaibar front ; how Nadir Khan's formidable diversion was turned into headlong rout by General Dyer at Thal ; how everything was ready for the advance, " when the Amir's request for negotiations rendered any further movement politically inexpedient " ; how " in spite of the armistice conditions Afghan officials were everywhere busy endeavouring to incite the tribesmen to rise " ; how General Wapshare was persistently and treacherously attacked, and might have destroyed the enemy, " but the political situation precluded him from adopting this obvious solution " ; how the troops " suffered great disadvantage as the result of the political situation . . . from the granting of the armistice at the beginning of June to the signing of peace on the 8th of August "—and, he might have added, long after—all these shameful circumstances are complacently narrated by Sir Charles Monro. Lord Roberts of Kandahar would rather have resigned his commission than have submitted to such political meddling with the conduct of a campaign.

Lord Hunter and his colleagues did not think themselves free to go into that side of the case ; but as I am not restricted by any terms of reference I am able to disclose to the reader the report of Sir George Roos-Keppel, then Chief Commissioner of the North-West Frontier Province, that the 15th of May 1919 was the date fixed both for the rebellion in India and the Afghan attack. Fortunately the Asiatic is not expert in the keeping of time-tables : the rising in Amritsar was precipitated by the arrest of the local leaders on the 10th of April ; the Afghan advance developed at the beginning of May. In the short space of time intervening, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, with the co-operation of such officers as General Beynon and Brigadier-General Dyer, had so dealt with the rebellion that Lahore could be left with eight British soldiers to protect the seat of Government when the Afghans launched their attack.

I do not claim for General Dyer all the credit (or discredit) of that pacification, although in the opinion of the Lieutenant-Governor his action was decisive. I merely point to the relation between these events : on the 13th of April, General Dyer struck at Amritsar ; by the end of that month the Afghan advance was begun on the Khaibar ; on the 8th of May Sir George Roos-Keppel surrounded the city of Peshawar ; on the 1st of June General Dyer relieved Thal. If these events are unconnected, there is much that it is difficult to understand ; if they are considered as a chain, they serve to explain one another.

Take, for example, the attacks on the railways

and telegraphs in the Punjab during April. Lines were cut, trains derailed, telegraphs destroyed to such an extent and with so much method and determination that the Hunter Committee was puzzled to account for them. "The attacks on communications were," it says (on p. 55), "in many cases motivated by sheer anti-Government feeling." This explanation—that a people, roused to spontaneous fury by the Rowlatt Acts, should demonstrate their indignation in so eccentric a manner—does not, however, quite satisfy the Committee, for it proceeds to give other possible reasons. It might have been done "to prevent the arrival of troops," &c., "for loot," or because it was "the most difficult of all forms of violence to discover or prevent," or because (page 58) "it was a very good beginning for any form of action against Government, and a necessary preliminary to the rise, growth, and spread of any movement of the sort."

Lord Milner, then a Member of the Coalition Government, found no significance at all in the widespread rioting, which he described as "singularly aimless and ineffective"; but if we take a railway map of India and consider the points at which these outrages occurred, we find that they cluster closely along the main lines of communication with the frontier. Consider that fact in the light of the description of the Afghan plan of campaign telegraphed by Sir George Roos-Keppel to the Indian Government: "At the same moment riots immobilising troops will break out all over India"; or of the 'manifesto' of the 'Provisional

Government of India ' found among Nadir Khan's baggage at Thal :—

“ A compact has been entered into with the forces of invasion by the Provisional Government. You should therefore . . . use every possible means to kill British, continue to tear up railways, and cut down the telegraphs,” &c.

“ Singularly aimless and ineffective ” only when cause and effect are not related ; when they are, singularly clear and purposeful !

If this were the true significance of the events of April 1919, would it not explain and justify the action of General Dyer ? He put the bulk of his force to guard the bridge-heads and railway lines. Why ? Because he was thinking of the frontier. He had only ninety men left for the stroke he meditated ; but it was not only power that was short, it was time. If the Amritsar rebels evaded his blow until the Manjha was well alight, the railways all cut, the frontier up, and the Afghans on the march—what then ? Was it not wisdom—and humanity—to strike, and to strike hard in such a situation ?

But suppose we refuse to put two and two together and persist in considering the ‘ disorders ’ by themselves. Were they merely political demonstrations, secular troubles, no more serious than the religious riots which at every festival disturb the peace of India ? There is difficulty in fixing the official view, since it changed with the political situation. At the time it was ‘ open rebellion,’ to be suppressed by all means, ‘ however drastic ’ ; but it shaded off in reminiscence until Lord Sinha, then Under-Secretary of State for India, could assure the

House of Lords, in tones of serpentine smoothness, that General Dyer shot down an unarmed crowd—"listening to a lecture."¹

The fact remains that the 'disorders' were held to be 'open rebellion' by the Punjab Government, by the Government of India, by the Secretary of State, and by the Hunter Committee. Amritsar was the centre of that rebellion. On the 10th April, after the attack on the civil lines, every one English inside the walls was murdered who could be reached, everything British or Christian destroyed, and the mob took possession of the city, which remained, not "in perfect tranquillity" (as Mr Asquith asserted), but in such a state of tense quiet as was sometimes reported from the lines in Flanders before another great offensive. "I claim," said Lord Birkenhead, "that any one who stands here and defends the case of General Dyer should be prepared to defend similar conduct in Glasgow or Belfast or Winnipeg." Let us suppose similar conditions: the Banks looted; the bankers burnt to death on piles of their own furniture; gangs of ruffians armed with clubs parading the streets; women and children trembling behind insecure fortifications; police and military in a state of siege; news coming in from many points of attacks on railways and towns; the harmless and respectable, cowering behind shuttered windows, hiding in cellars, or clamouring at railway stations to be carried out of the country; the Government set at naught—revolution, in fact, well alight, and the Army doubtful—in such circum-

¹ P.R., 19th July 1920, col. 248. The word "lecture" was first used by one of the Minority lawyers in cross-examination.

stances those who value law, order, and civilisation would be prepared to justify "similar conduct" anywhere.

If the reader wants a parallel, let him read the story of the Commune in Paris, the atrocities then committed, and the severity with which it was suppressed. When a city is burning and the furies of revolution are throwing its citizens into the fire, severe measures suddenly seem reasonable—even more when a whole country is threatened with a similar fate.

As to what that fate might have been, let me here cite a witness who will not be accused of bias in favour either of the soldier or the civil government. The Right Rev. A. E. J. Kenealy, Archbishop of Simla (in a letter to the 'Times' of 26th May 1920), described the possibilities in language sufficiently impressive. "There arose," he said, "an anti-white man movement of so menacing and widespread a character that, after murders of men, assaults on women, and the wrecking of property, the civil administration felt unequal to deal with the situation in certain specified areas. . . . If they (the military authorities) had hesitated they would have failed, and failure would have meant the general murder of European men, the outraging of women, the loot of public buildings, and the desecration of Christian churches. . . . This peril of murder and lust, loot and desecration, at the hands of an Oriental mob excited by unscrupulous propaganda to racial and fanatical frenzy, is not the wild fancy of a timid imagination ; it is a clear inference from ascertained facts. . . . Did you ever hear of

the eighty European women and children gathered together at a rallying-point in Lyallpur, waiting for troops to protect them, and concerning whom the mob put up notices saying there were so many English women to be ravished? . . . Can the public imagine what my thoughts were when, late at night before going to bed, I felt it my duty to visit some adjacent schools, where there were nearly 300 girls whose parents were hundreds or thousands of miles away, to see that all was well under the quiet watchfulness of a few British soldiers? ” Such was the danger as it seemed to a priest, even in the comparative safety of a hill station far from the seat of trouble. And I could cite a cloud of such witnesses to a similar effect.

There are moments in history which are like the watershed of a great mountain range: a kick may set the stone of destiny rolling either way to far different ends. If Louis XVI. had put himself resolutely at the head of his Guards instead of forbidding action, would the Swiss have been massacred, would the Tuileries have been sacked? The ‘whiff of grape-shot’ at the bridges certainly stopped the counter-revolution. On the 13th Vendémiaire, according to the most accurate of historians, 60,000 sectionnaires under arms had the Convention at their mercy. There was nothing to oppose them save Napoleon, with one gun loaded with grape and a handful of brigands. Contrast the salvation of Italy with the destruction of Russia. At the crisis of either fate, everything depended on the resolution of one or two men.

When we look back on those things it requires

imagination to justify violence. We think of Sulla as a cruel tyrant if we do not remember how Gaius Marius armed the slaves and led them into the city of Rome, how the gates were closed, and how "for five days and five nights the slaughter continued without interruption." Then Sulla's proscriptions are seen in a new light. If society is to accept the view that violence is never justified, it must bare its neck to the knife.

We must always try to judge men and events in their historical setting if we are to be just in retrospect. If General Dyer really did shoot down, in a time of perfect tranquillity, an unarmed crowd listening to a "lecture," then he was a monster, and the Government which did not put him on his trial for murder was hardly less criminal. But then everything becomes incredible, and not least the character of General Dyer.

My reading of that character is that it was essentially humane. To take an illustration from the narrative, Dyer's first action when he pacified the Sarhad was to liberate the Persian captives from a wretched state of slavery. An officer who served under him tells this story:—

"We had marched all night and far into the scorching morning; at last the column halted, and we sat down to await the arrival of the baggage. The General, by this time worn and ill, and on the point of being placed on the sick list, had thrown himself down in the scanty shade of a stunted bush. After a time, desiring a drink of water, he called out to his Indian bearer to bring his water-bottle. No reply came, however, so he looked round and saw that his bearer had gone off to sleep, with the usual facility of the Indian for taking a nap at any odd moment. The

bearer was young and strong, and I quite expected that the General would arouse him with a shout. Instead of this, Dyer wearily and painfully got to his feet, walked over, and quietly took the water-bottle from beside the sleeping boy, and returned carefully without waking him." ¹

A small incident, as the writer says, yet impossible to reconcile with 'Dyerism.' I have touched in the course of his story on the singular love of his Indian troops for their General. Colonel Claridge, late of the 28th Light Cavalry, whose regiment was stationed with the 25th Punjabis at Multan, who long afterwards served with him in the Sarhad, gives me two more characteristic anecdotes to illustrate this extraordinary devotion. An Indian officer, a Muhammadan, said to Claridge (at Multan), "I have only one God (Kudah), but if I had two, Colonel Dyer Sahib would be the other." And again, it was the General's custom in the Sarhad to have with him a mounted orderly carrying a small Union Jack as a pennant on his lance, so that his whereabouts could easily be distinguished. During one of his expeditions a senior Indian officer, with several others, went to Colonel Claridge in his tent and begged that he would ask the General not to carry with him any sign which would make him a conspicuous mark for the enemy. Every rank, they said, deplored the very thought of losing their leader; and when, with some difficulty, he prevailed upon the General to comply, the Indian troops cordially thanked Colonel Claridge.

It may be said—and reasonably—that an officer

¹ "E. P. Y." (Major E. P. Yeates) in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' December 1927, p. 795.

might be popular with his troops and yet be brutal to civilians. But the Persian slaves were not soldiers, nor were those unfortunates of Peshawar whom Dyer toiled to rescue from the fire. What again are we to make of that huge crowd which overflowed the Circuit House compound of Amritsar in its eagerness to thank General Dyer—for what? For shooting a crowd of citizens listening to a lecture? They were not soldiers but civilians, not British but Indian, natives of the city in which General Dyer had just been wallowing in what Mr Montagu called “terrorism, racial humiliation, and frightfulness.” Singular gratitude!

What, further, are we to think of the Sikhs for making the General and his Brigade-Major free of their Brotherhood? Was it to honour him for ‘subordination’ that they raised the shrine at Guru Sat Sultani?

In the year 1922 Captain Ivon Dyer happened to be serving on the North-West Frontier, and the column stopped the night at a post held by a Punjabi regiment. He was a guest at their mess, when, in the middle of dinner, a servant entered, and announced that the Sikhs of the regiment desired to see him. Very much astonished, Captain Dyer asked permission of the Colonel of the regiment to leave the table. Going out together they found two ranks of about fifty Sikhs—officers, N.C.O.’s, and sepoys—who said that they had heard of the arrival of the son of General Dyer, and had come to pay him their respects: “*Hamara Jarnail Sahib abhi Sikh bangaya—bari khushi ki bat hai.*”¹ And

¹ Our General Sahib has been made a Sikh—a very pleasing thing.

then, while the Colonel looked on in amazement, the junior officer shook hands with each man, and was asked to take down their names to send to his father—as if he had been a prince.

Such people, after all, are more creditable representatives of India than the mob which looted the Banks and murdered the bankers of Amritsar. And here let me say that English politicians are not exactly flattering their Indian fellow-subjects when they speak as if that mob represented the Indian people. Colonel Smith, I.M.S., who narrowly escaped with his life at the Missionary Hospital, was in a better position to discriminate. "The class of men whom I saw at work on that building," he said in evidence, "were not the middle class of the city. They were hooligans. They were the class of men I would expect to be looting shops . . ." and so on. And again: "My information from one of the most respectable men in Amritsar, who is not a politician himself, is that these gangs were organised on the night of 9th April, and that there was a butcher attached to each gang."¹

The death of some hundreds of such people—rebels or their associates—does not seem, when we consider the million men recently lost in its defence, an extortionate price to pay for the safety of an empire. It would only be atrocious were it unjustified by the circumstances. The Louvain business, from which his critics drew such phrases as 'Prussianism,' 'frightfulness,' and so forth, was a case of an enemy force, itself by its mere presence a trespasser and wrongdoer, committing outrages upon a population

¹ 'Minutes of Evidence,' vol. iii. p. 51 *et seq.*

which was, on the facts, passive (except for some minor individual assault on a German) and innocent. There is no parallel between Louvain and Amritsar if we consider the facts. If there were some killed, who were innocent in mind and intention, as there may have been, the blame for their death should be laid not at the door of the soldier who suppressed, but of the conspirators and agitators who instigated the rebellion.

But was General Dyer condemned upon the facts or upon what he wrote and is alleged to have said? Take the main case against him—the shooting. The Committee admit the fact of the rebellion; they admit that “the military situation at the time” may “justify firing without the formality of giving notice to disperse”; they admit that “the only person who can judge . . . is the officer in command of the troops”; but they condemn General Dyer because he “does not suggest the existence of such an emergency”; because “his mind was made up as he came along in his motor-car.” General Dyer is, therefore, condemned upon his evidence—written and spoken.

What he wrote in the Dalhousie report we have already seen, and we have also seen the Government of India's proclamation of the 14th of April 1919. Is there so much difference between the General's point of view and the Government's, between the General's phrase, “There was no question of undue severity,” and the Government's “all means, however drastic?” There is really only this difference—that the General wrote six months afterwards what the Government of India wrote at the time;

that the General remained and the Government did not remain of the same mind.

I have before me a telegram signed Hailey,¹ dated Simla, 4th September 1919, to General Dyer at Dalhousie, "Report received yesterday," and another (undated) from "Hailey, Government of India, Simla," saying that the report was being returned by registered post. It is a curious circumstance: the report had been ordered by and written to the General Staff; but it was specially asked for and seen by the Indian Government before it was submitted to the Hunter Committee. Was it in order to help the soldier to present his case? There is the authority of General Dyer for saying that the only alteration proposed by Mr Hailey was that the word 'rebels' should not be used. But if they were not rebels whom General Dyer shot, there was the less need to create "a moral effect throughout the Punjab"; and Mr Hailey, as a member of the Government of India, afterwards condemned General Dyer for this "mistaken conception of his duty." Singular procedure, to suggest the weakening of the defence before condemning the defendant!

As for the spoken word, when Mr Montagu was asked why General Dyer was not given the opportunity of seeing the record, he replied that the General "did not correct his evidence because of his duties on the frontier," and hoped "the House would take that into account."² As a matter of fact, General Dyer, being at Jamrud, was within easy reach of the Committee, and it seems un-

¹ Now Sir Malcolm Hailey, Governor of the United Provinces.

² P.D., 7th July 1920, cols. 1412-1413.

reasonable to ask the House to take into account the possibility that what Mr Montagu quoted against General Dyer might not be what General Dyer said.

The truth is that those alleged indiscretions^o of General Dyer were extremely convenient to a Government which desired to make him a scapegoat. As they had supported what he did, it was easier to convict him on what he said. Not thus did the Government support its officers in the great Mutiny. Take the case of Mr Cooper. The 26th Native Infantry mutinied on the 30th July 1857, murdered their Colonel and four officers, and fled from Lahore to join the mutineers marching on Delhi. They were intercepted at Ajwala, near Amritsar, by Mr Cooper, the Deputy Commissioner, with a body of armed Punjab Police, forced to surrender, and shot—to the number of 240. Sir John Lawrence, the Lieutenant-Governor, wrote to Mr Cooper on the 2nd of August congratulating him on his success. "You and your police," he added, "acted with much energy and spirit, and deserve well of the State. I trust the fate of these sepoys will act as a warning to others." Some months later Cooper described his action in his 'Crisis in the Punjab,' and gloried in the carnage in a style which Lawrence found 'nauseating.' But Lord Canning made this comment: "I hope that Mr Cooper will be judged by his acts done under stern necessity rather than by his own narrative of them."

Of all the witnesses the two of most authority in support of General Dyer were Sir Michael O'Dwyer and Mr J. P. Thompson, Chief Secretary to the Government of the Punjab. Their evidence was

heard *in camera*, and was never laid before the House of Commons and the British public. There is, indeed, a Vol. VI. of the evidence marked 'confidential,' which contains not only this testimony but much other matter of no less importance to the case—the record of the many attempts to spread the rebellion to the Indian Army; incriminating evidence against Gandhi and his fellow-conspirators; an account of the situation on the frontier, and the Afghan correspondence, &c. When Sir Michael O'Dwyer chose to defend his reputation against the aspersions of Sir Sankaran Nair, he applied for a copy of this volume. The India Office, after a great deal of difficulty and delay, let him have one, but took the precaution of blacking over many of the pages—including some of Sir Michael's own evidence—and ripping out others, including the testimony of Sir Umar Hayat Khan, who had blamed Sir Michael for the mildness of his policy! In the trial the other side flourished before the court an unexpurgated copy of this volume.¹

Even a great reason of State could not justify such furtive proceedings and shameful concealments; but what, as a matter of fact, was gained? The design in appointing the Hunter Committee is plain—to placate those who had fomented the rebellion and were thought necessary to the working of a new system of government. But did it, or could it even have been expected to succeed? The design is to placate a party which accuses an officer of murdering some hundreds of its members while

¹ The trial took place when Lord Olivier was Secretary of State for India.

they were listening to a lecture—how? Why, by depriving that officer of his command! If General Dyer was guilty of what he was accused of, the punishment was inadequate; if he was innocent, it was unjust. Surely the Government would have stood better, even with the agitator, if, after suppressing the rebellion, it had justified stern measures as necessary to the establishment of order, the only true foundation of freedom. As it was, the Government's action certainly did not propitiate the Congress Party, which pursues to this day, as we see in the reception of Sir John Simon's Commission, the same implacable policy. That also is an attempt to reconcile the irreconcilable, and that also will fail.

The effect of the policy for which General Dyer was sacrificed is to shift the pillars of our Indian Empire from sound to unsound foundations, from the well-affected to the disaffected. A short time before the General left India he happened to meet an Indian gentleman who had recently made a speech at Delhi violently attacking the Government. "Why," said General Dyer, "I have known you all these years as loyal to the Raj. What has happened to change your opinions?" "Nothing," his friend replied, "but consider my position. I was a poor struggling vakil. I saw others gaining favour for holding other opinions. I had to consider my family. I had never been noticed by Government before I made that speech; but immediately afterwards I was invited to Simla, and deferentially consulted, and I am now on the high road to preferment."

General Dyer was only one out of a vast multitude

of the true and loyal injured or sacrificed to placate the implacable. At this time of writing the Princes, whose loyalty was our main support in India during the war, are protesting against a policy which is undermining their position, and thousands of loyal men in British India, who dare not protest, feel more heavily because more directly the effects of the surrender. All those brave, simple, splendid, warlike races, with which the English gentleman comes to so easy and so natural an understanding, feel themselves betrayed in being put under the domination of people who exploit them and whom they despise.

These are wide questions. The issue of this narrative is more simple. When rebellion and anarchy threaten a State, a Government, if it is to survive, must fight for its existence. The effect of the Dyer case might be to oppress with a sort of moral stupor or paralysis those charged with the duty of its defence.

We find in the Dyer debates the underlying suggestion that the burden of proof is on the official who fires ; that he has to clear himself of blame ; that he is fortunate if he escapes punishment. The Government boasts a moderation in censure because of all the officers who fired General Dyer is the only one punished. If the soldier, then, is to be treated as a suspect, who will receive no support or counsel in his defence, how is he to be expected to make that great effort of will and courage which, even with the knowledge of Government support, is required in an emergency ? Let me quote a case in point from Sir Henry Wilson's Diary of the 6th of

April 1921, when the Government evidently feared a rising in London, since barricades were raised in Downing Street :—

“ Jeffreys described to me his interview last night with Lloyd George and the silly questions Lloyd George asked him about the danger of Red trench-mortars on the roof of the Ritz, of crowds collecting in twos and threes, of guarding Whitehall, &c., and also of his (Jeffreys’) question to Lloyd George as to whether our officers would be supported in any action that it may be thought necessary to take, as they had not forgotten the Dyer case. This was the culminating point, and Lloyd George bounced out of the room.”¹

That Government destroys itself which paralyses its executive arm.

I have said that General Dyer was a humane man. I will go a step farther and say that his motive, even as he expressed it, was a motive of humanity. He knew the danger. He saw the only way of averting it : as when the boy faced the hyena on the Himalayan path and daunted it by his courage, so in Amritsar he quelled a rising rebellion which might have devastated a province by one bold act. But let us put motive aside ; let us say that, like an English mastiff, he acted on instinct, leaped at the throat of the hyena, and so ended it.

As it may be humane to destroy a wild beast, so it is humane to suppress a rebellion. Such is the defence of General Dyer ; but his whole life, devoted to his duty and his country, seems to me to put his case. If defence he considered superfluous, let me say here that when he was dying, his friends, realising that his end was near, made an attempt to

¹ Vol. II. p. 28.

persuade the Government of the day to give effect to the judicial vindication and revoke the censure of the Coalition Government of 1920. Sir Michael O'Dwyer pressed the case in the 'Edinburgh Review' of July 1927, and followed it up by an appeal to the Secretary of State (Lord Birkenhead) to show justice—which might be called mercy—to a dying man, to whom honour meant so much, so that his widow and children might be able to say that he did not go to the grave under a cloud. The appeal was the more reasonable as practically all of the Amritsar rebels—even some of the murderers—had been amnestied or released within a year; but it was made nevertheless in vain. "They ne'er pardon who have done the wrong."

"Thus came Faithful to his end"; but the interested verdicts of politicians, "made upon a supposition, to prevent mischief," are not final. It was observed by those who went out of the church at Long Ashton, after the funeral service, that a rainbow of astonishing brightness made an arch over the landscape, and it seemed to them like the close of that life, passing out through a sudden effulgence of justice: "... knowing the whole of the evidence given in this case, I express my view [said the Judge] that General Dyer acted rightly..."

